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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE CONTINUITY AND CONSISTENCY OF HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIS POETRY AND ESSAYS

BY

ROBERT JOHN MURPHY

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

IN

GERMAN LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE CONTINUITY AND CONSISTENCY OF HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIS POETRY AND ESSAYS submitted by ROBERT MURPHY in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in GERMAN LITERATURE.

Dr. Holger Pausch

Dr. Raleigh Whitinger

Dr. Edward Mozejko

Date: Friday, August 21, 1992

DEDICATION

To my parents

Ann and John Murphy

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the connection between poetry and political thought in the poetic works of Hans Magnus Enzensberger.

The development of the argument in the thesis follows the chronology of Enzensberger's own publications, beginning in 1957 and ending in 1980. This chronological approach serves to reflect the setbacks that a political poet faces when dealing with subject-matter that is in a constant state of flux, and illustrates Enzensberger's descent from utopianism to dystopianism.

This thesis also addresses the question of why Enzensberger stopped writing poetry in 1980, a question previously avoided in the context of Enzensberger's poetic development.

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Introduction

The innovative ideas and political thought present in the poetry of Hans Magnus Enzensberger were a major source of interest for readers and critics. In an historical period of German reconstruction when the economy was growing and the standard of living was rising, Enzensberger's voice began to ring out in protest. The critics had to grapple with a poet who was criticising a country that was experiencing probably its greatest economic growth since industrialisation in the nineteenth century, and German society, which was at its highest level of prosperity in decades. The reaction of the press to Enzensberger's "affront" was to attack the poet and defend the country,[1] thereby pushing aside, or ignoring completely, the value of the messages Enzensberger was attempting to convey to the public.

However, many critics and scholars[2] reacted, for the most part, favourably to Enzensberger's constructive criticism of a country that had had a singular opportunity to reconstruct itself from the beginning, but which was becoming simply another self-satisfied, wealthy western nation. Critics rose

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[1] See Arnim Czolbe, "Enzensberger und die häßlichen Deutschen," Der Spiegel 28 June 1976: 138-139.

[2] Especially Reinhold Grimm, Texturen. Essays und anderes zu Hans Magnus Enzensberger (New York: Lang, 1984). Klaus Schuhmann, "Kritik und Utopie als dichterische Auftrag und moralische Verpflichtung," Weltbild und Poetik, (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1979).

to the challenge of examining a man who had blended the traditionally aesthetic poetic medium with the realities of socio-political mismanagement and its ensuing problems. Their method was usually to concentrate on one collection of poems or essays, or even single poems and essays, and examine them in the context of past political writers such as the expressionist Benn or Brecht, or to compare them with another of Enzensberger's past works.

There is a tendency amongst critics of Enzensberger to concentrate their research on one of two broad fields, namely the interpretation of his poetry or essays alone, or an examination of the socio-political implications of his work with less attention to Enzensberger's primary material. These two fields of criticism necessarily complement each other, for it was Enzensberger who desired his poetic work to have an effect not only in the academic sphere of aesthetic interpretation, but also in reality.

During the 1960s, when political activity was at its highest level in the German population, there was a tendency among critics[3] to dwell more on the political meanings of Enzensberger's poetry and essays. This type of criticism took the form of short essays with a highly focussed concentration

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[3] See Christian Linder, "Der lange Sommer der Romantik. Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger," Literaturmagazin 4. Die Literatur nach dem Tod der Literatur. Bilanz der Politisierung, (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975) 85-107. Hans Egon Holthusen, "Chorführer der Neuen Aufklärung. Über den Lyriker Hans Magnus Enzensberger," Merkur 9 (1980): 896-912.

on single aspects of Enzensberger's thought, resulting in a large output of enlightening but unconnected observations. Even up to 1970 there was no authoritative work of any length that attempted to deal with Enzensberger's complete works, and reconcile the aesthetic poetic form with the practical realities that the poet wished to address.

In 1970, a collection of short critical essays from the 1960s was published[4] providing the best general view not only of the criticism of that decade, but of its fractured nature. There are few essays in this volume that are longer than ten pages, and even fewer that attempt to clarify the use of the poem to effect change in reality. Especially noteworthy in this collection are the essays that deal with the state of Enzensberger's revolutionary thought by Madeleine Gustafsson,[5] Jürgen Habermas[6] and Karl Heinz Bohrer,[7] all of which deal with the revolutionary nature of the poet whilst conceding that Enzensberger's critical position is somewhat weak. These common conclusions can be explained by the fact that literary

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[4] Joachim Schickel, ed., Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970).

[5] Madeleine Gustafsson, "Radikaler als seine Dichtung," Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 110-114.

[6] Jürgen Habermas, "Vom Ende der Politik," Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 154-159.

[7] Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Revolution als Metapher," Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 271-275.

criticism had not managed to come to terms with poetry having any effect beyond that of the past, traditional role of amusement and nothing more.

After 1968, when Enzensberger's political hopes seemed lost, literary criticism reflected the poet's own disenchantment with the political world by concentrating on the poetic aspects of Enzensberger's work.[8] The failure of poetry to reach a broad enough readership for it to have any effect amongst the general populace, together with the inability of the critics to examine poetry and politics in conjunction with each other, caused the poet to abandon the more direct social and political criticism he had exercised during the 1960s. Instead, Enzensberger's poetic criticism became increasingly subtle and even further beyond the reach of the average disinterested German citizen, and, judging by some critical material on the Mausoleum collection of poems, beyond the reach of many critics too.[9]

It was not until the late 1970s, when Der Untergang der Titanic was published, that critical works began to deal with longer time-periods and numerous collections from

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[8] E.g. Herbert Heckmann, "Wandlungen der Lyrik," Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 14-18. Volker Bohn, "'Die Furie des Verschwindens.' Zu Hans Magnus Enzensbergers Poetik," Neue Rundschau 97 (1986): 97-109.

[9] See for example Michaelis's description of this collection in: Frank Dietschreit and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986) 109.

Enzensberger's career. Critics such as Reinhold Grimm began to examine the poet's work in the context of other poets and contemporary literature,[10] thereby relativising Enzensberger's poetry and providing it with the firm historical base that it had lacked in literary criticism. This relativising of Enzensberger's poetry was necessary to remove the illusion that his work was simply more aesthetic poetry; it had to have meaning beyond that of the traditional poem to be of any real social consequence. That literary criticism in Enzensberger's case had only begun to reflect upon the problem of how the poetic form is able to deal with political reality in the late 1970s and early 1980s, shows how belated the eventual arrival of valuable criticism was.

After Enzensberger's last volume of poems, Die Furie des Verschwindens, had been published in 1980, critics such as Karla Lydia Schultz attempted to tackle his career by comparing early material with that from his last volume. In one essay[11] she compares the early poem "utopia" with Enzensberger's last, "Die Furie," and reveals some highly enlightening views on the anarchic nature of Enzensberger's

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[10] See especially the two essays from the collection: Grimm, Texturen. Essays und anderes zu Hans Magnus Enzensberger (New York: Lang, 1984) entitled "Das Messer im Rücken. Utopisch-dystopische Bildlichkeit bei Hans Magnus Enzensberger," 148-168, and "Eiszeit und Untergang. Zu einem Motivkomplex in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur," 174-217.

[11] Karla Lydia Schulz, "Writing as Disappearing: Enzensberger's Negative Utopian Move," Monatshefte 78.2 (1986): 196.

political thought and its effect on his poems. However, this essay, although uniting elements of his work with political thought and criticism, deals only with two poems, and therefore lacks the authoritative nature that a more comprehensive work would have provided. Schultz's intention was clearly not to provide such a comprehensive work, but the field of research and criticism still lacked any extensive examination of the poet's career as a whole.

In 1982, Helmut Müller published a book dealing with West German poets and politics, and included a section on Enzensberger.[12] MÜller does trace Enzensberger's integration of poetry and politics from the beginning of his career, including the poet's own essays on poetry and politics, but deals only marginally with Enzensberger's poems. Up to 1982, Müller's work, although somewhat limited in length, provides the best illustration of the development of Enzensberger's politics during his career.

There was, however, a book published in 1981 by Ingrid Eggers,[13] which constituted the literary equivalent of Müller's political work. Eggers had published the first comprehensive examination of Enzensberger's complete works, providing therewith a clear overview of Enzensberger's

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[12] Helmut Müller, "Hans Magnus Enzensberger: Der Schriftsteller als Utopist," Die literarische Republik. Westdeutsche Schriftsteller und die Poetik (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz, 1982) 235-251.

[13] Ingrid Eggers, Veränderungen des Literaturbegriffs im Werk von Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt: Lang, 1981).

literary development, not only in his poems but in his essays and prose too. Although this book does provide a useful insight into the development of a poet, there is still no critical work available at this time which adequately unites Enzensberger's politics and poetry as they are so clearly linked in his own work.

The most informative guide to Enzensberger's work to date was published in 1986 by Frank Dietschreit and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit,[14] whose work consists of brief examinations of Enzensberger's individual publications and synopses of their critical reception. As a source of information, this thorough work remains unsurpassed, but it contains very little new criticism on Enzensberger, the authors being content simply to report existing criticism as a reference for readers of the poet.

In spite of the large amount of critical material written about Enzensberger's politics, his poetry and his poetic technique and style, there remains no adequate work which examines Enzensberger's complete poetic output over the twenty-three years that he published poetry and no work unites his poetry and politics in a critical study of his development as a political poet. Furthermore, since Enzensberger stopped publishing poetry in 1980, there has been a marked decrease in the amount of scholarly material dealing with his poetic

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[14] Frank Dietschreit and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986).

career. That this decrease in criticism took place is not unexpected, because there is no continued output from the poet. However, critics have omitted to confront the question of why Enzensberger stopped writing, in the context of his successes and failures throughout his career.

To ask this question necessarily requires an examination of the poet's career as a whole, for his poetry did not consist of individual, free-standing collections, but was a series of works, with one leading on from the last. It must be borne in mind that there was the guiding principle of attempted popular enlightenment behind Enzensberger's collections of poems, so where one collection failed, the next would constitute a correction or slight change of perspective from the last, in order to maintain a continuously sound critical base with which to influence his readers. That he ceased to write poetry therefore suggests much more than simply the demise of a poet. It also indicates the end of a political principle that involved the innovative use of poetry as a means of social influence. To take the end of Enzensberger's career as a poet for granted is highly unsatisfactory, and constitutes a rather large oversight by researchers of Enzensberger.

This thesis is an attempt to find not only the reasons for Enzensberger's abandonment of the poetic medium as a means for delivering political criticism and a means of enlightenment, but also to follow the work of a political poet

whose politics exist outside those of a party, movement, or indeed any traditional alignment per se. An examination of Enzensberger's complete poems reveals how fundamentally important the ideas of development and adaptability are to the understanding of this poet, due to the constantly changing nature of his political subject-matter. The conclusions reached by this thesis serve to add to the research on Enzensberger by revealing the adaptable nature of the poet, and why, in spite of this adaptability, he chose to abandon poetry in 1980.

Chapter 1

The Problem of the Political Poet.

Can a poet maintain a consistency within his work over a period of some twenty-five years, when the subject of his labours is in a constant state of flux? It seems to be possible, yet the key to success is adaptability. Enzensberger's subject, aim, means and method, the foundations of his work, seem flexible enough. His subject was Germany. His aim was to influence the changes that took place in this country from its redevelopment in the 1950s to its economic consolidation in the 1980s. His means was poetry, which he politicized, not in the sense of adhering to the manifestoes of any party or movement; adaptability would not allow for that. It was political in that it dealt with government, society and economic considerations. His method was to make his adaptability consistent, maintaining a similar aggressive posture towards the state throughout his career.

But what of incentive? Is it possible to remain optimistic for a quarter of a century that society can be changed through literature? Is the readership adaptable enough even to accept literature of a critical nature, especially concerning a government that most have voted for? Enzensberger's literary task appears to be impossible to fulfil. How can he hope to remain consistent when faced with unsympathetic readers and only moderate success, and is

"political" poetry the right tool to use? The combination of an aesthetic form with the practical considerations of politics seems irreconcilable. "Schon der Begriff 'politische Lyrik' scheint eine Contradictio in adjecto," observes Walter Hinderer. "Meint er Lyrik über Politik, meint er, daß Poesie hier politisch oder Politik ästhetisch wird? Finden hier nicht unerlaubte Grenzüberschreitungen statt?"[15] Such is the dilemma of the poet dealing with political themes; to what extent should poetry be compromised to convey a political message? Enzensberger's response would be to leave poetry as it is, not to politicize it, nor to aestheticize politics. The two elements cannot coexist without producing the laughable results of Fontane and Becher that Enzensberger examines in his essay "Poesie und Politik" of 1962.[16]

Enzensberger is not a politician. Nor is he the leader of a group of common-minded individuals, nor does he aspire to leadership; he is a poet. His poetry takes on political relevance in an entirely different way to that of Fontane or Becher, for example. Their poetry, as he says, loses its credibility because the poem's meaning has been stipulated from "without." Enzensberger worked on the premise that a

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[15] Walter Hinderer, "Sprache und Methode: Bemerkungen zur politischen Lyrik der sechziger Jahre," Revolte und Experiment. Die Literatur der sechziger Jahre in Ost und West, ed. Wolfgang Paulsen (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm, 1971) 98.

[16] See especially Fontane's 'Wo Bismarck liegen soll', Becher's hymn on the death of Stalin and the National Anthems of the GDR and the FRG, together with the Hitler hymns of Gaiser, Seidel and Carossa.

poem's meaning must be immanent within itself; it must come from within the poem. He therefore keeps poetry separate from the direct influence of politics. No contact between poetry and politics is even necessary because, as he says, poetry's mere presence is critical enough:

> Es [das Gedicht] überführt, solange es nur anwesend ist, Regierungserklärung und Reklameschrei, Manifest und Transparent der Lüge. Sein kritisches Werk ist kein anderes als das des Kindes im Märchen. Daß der Kaiser keine Kleider trägt, zu dieser Einsicht ist kein 'Engagement' vonnöten. Genug, daß ein einziger Vers das sprachlose Gejohl des Beifalls bricht.[17]

No "forbidden crossing of borders" takes place in Enzensberger's poetry, and yet it is still able to have a political impact, achieved through maintaining the autonomous nature of the poem.

Enzensberger's political concepts, the basis of his criticisms, are difficult to grasp due to their changeability. However, they are, as Helmut Müller says, essentially anarchistic, constantly attacking the state and those in power who control the majority. Political power was to Enzensberger a principle that threatened the freedom of the individual. For him, the state was an apparatus that was always an obstruction to freedom. His attempts to defeat the state with poetry

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[17] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik," Einzelheiten II. Poesie und Politik, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1962) 136.

reveals Enzensberger's utopian thought, due to the fact that "Enzensberger zielte tendenziell auf eine Welt ohne Gesetz und Zwang, auf einen unpolitischen Zustand. Hauptangriffspunkt wurde für dieses 'anarchistische' Denken der Staat und seine Vertreter."[18] Enzensberger's 'thought is best termed utopian rather than idealistic due to the less tangible connotations of the former, reflecting the changeability of the poet's politics.

This aggressive position has caused critics great difficulties in coming to terms with Enzensberger. For instance, in the late sixties Günter Grass called Enzensberger naive and a charlatan for publicly appealing for a similar state of affairs in Germany to the one that existed in France in 1968, namely that of revolution. At this time in Germany, Enzensberger had aligned himself with the student movement and its demands, and was, in the fullest sense, a revolutionary writer. In this context, his unwillingness to take anything for granted and maintain a friction with the establishment led to the charges that he was naive or basking in a utopia. On the other hand, his stand to protect basic rights against any docile acceptance of their diminution by government also created the famous and infamous image of him being a true critic of Germany when literary political opposition was at

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[18] Müller 239.

a minimum. The charge of utopianism[19] is not entirely unfair, however, because Enzensberger was primarily a poet, dealing with abstract concepts in his poems whilst criticising real social and political institutions. This constituted an apparently incompatible juxtaposition of topic and method, which nevertheless proved to be a more than suitable means for a critical basis.

His main aims in writing seem to have been to make his readership aware of a utopia, which, although unachievable in itself, would draw their attention to the flaws in their present social and political structures. This he pursued from the mid-fifties, at the height of the German Economic Miracle when the state and press were reconsolidating themselves after the war, through to the eighties when he stopped publishing because he was concerned that the powers of social control so obvious in the Nazi era were being reestablished in their old forms in the Federal Republic. The explosion of wealth had brought with it a cosy apathy towards politics, which had anyway been repressed during the Nazi years. The people needed a literary figurehead to re-awaken their awareness to this post-war period and the quiet consolidation of the old ruling-classes in an allegedly new system. Popular awareness of the lack of actual change, to be achieved through this utopia,

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[19] One of Enzensberger's first poems was entitled "utopia".

would slow this process and perhaps lead to greater popular representation.

It was clear to Enzensberger that democracy was simply another system where the same classes ruled and the same classes were ruled. His utopia is a defence against the blind acceptance of "democracy," providing the dream of something better to offset and combat the forces loyal to the status quo, the forces of conformity and subjugation. His main complaint against this system was that "real democracy, as opposed to the formal facades of parliamentary democracy, does not exist anywhere in the world, but its ghost haunts every existing regime. Consequently, all the existing power structures must seek to obtain the consent, however passive, of their subjects," and hence, "the self-appointed elites who run modern societies must try to control people's minds."[20] To call Enzensberger utopian therefore, should not be seen as a negative assessment, but more of a source for constructive social criticism and popular enlightenment.

The main tools at his disposal for the projection of his utopia and hence his attack on the status quo, were his poems, wherein he voiced his opinions and made them public. He used poetry because he viewed it as infinitely valuable, but with one drawback. He admitted himself it was elitist, "von wenigen

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[20] Enzensberger, "The Industrialization of the Mind," trans. H.M. Enzensberger, The Consciousness Industry. On Literature, Politics and the Media, ed. M. Roloff (New York: Seabury, 1974) 11.

für wenige gemacht."[21] This elitism in poetry and literature in general he attempted to dissolve, for its future relevance and usefulness in society would be the final judgement on its survival. It had to have a bond with the present by being critical, especially of accepted institutions, which in turn would provide a new role for it, namely that of being educational to the reader.

Enzensberger was also aware that the role of literature within the Federal Republic had gone in completely the wrong direction after the war. It had become a haven for new ideas but had simultaneously stifled political action. Any new thought in literature was kept separate from any effect it might have on politics. Poetry itself had become a replacement for action, and revolution had become a literary metaphor, as Enzensberger says:

> Die Literatur sollte eintreten für das, was in der Bundesrepublik nicht vorhanden war, ein genuin politisches Leben. So wurde die Restauration bekämpft, als wäre sie ein literarisches Phänomen, nämlich mit literarischen Mitteln; Opposition ließ sich abdrängen auf die Feuilletonseiten; Umwälzungen in der Poetik sollten einstehen für die ausgebliebene Revolutionierung der sozialen Strukturen;

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[21] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend," Palaver. Politische Überlegungen, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974) 43.

> künstlerische Avantgarde die politische Regression kaschieren.[22]

Poetry had to make its presence felt, to show once more that the Emperor was wearing no clothes.

Although literature had become a replacement for political activity, Enzensberger still tried to keep the two elements of poetry and politics apart, but in as much as poetry should be totally autonomous, free of all and any prescribed roles. He says of the poem, "Sein politischer Auftrag ist, sich jedem politischen Auftrag zu verweigern und für alle zu sprechen noch dort, wo es von keinem spricht, von einem Baum, von einem Stein, von dem was nicht ist."[23] It is through this independence from outside influence that poetry can remain utopian in nature and continue to look to the future where improvement can be hoped for. But as Enzensberger said:

> Nicht das sie [die Poesie] über die Zukunft spräche: sondern so, als wäre Zukunft möglich, als ließe sich frei sprechen unter Unfreien, als wäre nicht Entfremdung und Sprachlosigkeit (da doch Sprachlosigkeit sich selbst nicht aussprechen, Entfremdung sich nicht mitteilen kann).[24]

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[22] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze" 44-45.

[23] Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 136.

[24] Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 136.

Thus, poetry is a tool for looking to futures unknown and for discussing that which does not exist. It is this very tool that lends itself so perfectly to the expression of possibilities and utopian thought. It is also from this that poetry draws its critical power "weil sie [die Poesie] niemands Magd ist."[25]

During the course of Enzensberger's career, literary theory was attempting to come to terms with the increasingly political nature of literature. Throughout the sixties, a discourse ("Warenästhetik") was opened, mainly by Adorno, on the devaluing of art and literature, which, in the capitalist world, was being reduced to a simple tradeable commodity. Enzensberger seemed unsympathetic to this view, which he indicated by saying:

> das Gesetz des Marktes [hat] sich die Literatur ebenso, ja vielleicht noch mehr unterworfen... als andere Erzeugnisse. Da sich aber die Herstellung von Margarine offenbar leichter monopolistisch verwalten läßt als die von Literatur, stellt eine solche Einsicht deren Betrieb direkt in Frage.[26]

There is doubt that Enzensberger's regard for the power of poetry and literature in general could be debased to the level of a mere commodity, which casts doubt on the observation of Hans Heinz Holz, when he said that art, having become a

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[25] Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 129.

[26] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze" 43.

commodity, was subject to all the pressures of the marketplace, and that the forces of supply and demand on literature were the same as on any other item, with one exception: "nur hat die Verkaufsstrategie sich danach zu richten, daß die angebotene Ware keinen unmittelbaren Gebrauchsnutzen besitzt, sondern für den Erwerber einen... ideellen Wert darstellt."[27] The difference between the ideal value of the market and the actual political value of literature is what sets Enzensberger apart from this discourse. Poetry was, for Enzensberger, far more than a simple commodity, as Hohendahl observed: "Die Poesie sei für Enzensberger über allen Zweifel erhaben. Sie stehe für die Freiheit, die sonst überall verraten werde. Sie sei frei gegenüber allen Ansprüchen der Herrschaft."[28]

The main stream of the literary political discourse was taken up first by Herbert Marcuse, followed by Peter Schneider and, coincidentally, Enzensberger's brother Christian. Marcuse's thought was based on the achievement of truth in politics through art. He argued that art and reality come together when art gives up its autonomous status and becomes part of everyday human activity.[29] This is precisely what

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[27] Hans Heinz Holz, Vom kunstwerk zur Ware (Neuwied und Berlin: Luchterhand, 1972) 16.

[28] Müller 238.

[29] See Peter Hohendahl, "Politisierung der Kunsttheorie: Zur ästhetischen Diskussion nach 1965," Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965. Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. P.M. Lützeler and E. Schwarz (Königstein/Ts: Athenäum, 1980)

Enzensberger tried to achieve with the publication of verteidigung der wölfe.[30] Schneider argued that although art might become more familiar, it had, under capitalism, lost its revolutionary nature. He said that art no longer expressed the possibility of the realisation of the future but quite the opposite: "sie macht aus der wirklichen Zerstörung der Wünsche, aus dem wirklichen Elend eine Art Versprechen, in dem sie es auch noch zu einem Gegenstand der Einbildung werden läßt."[31] The return to active literature is what Enzensberger sought. No longer could literature irrelevant to society be tolerated. Schneider blended the thinking of Adorno and Marcuse and came to the conclusion that in the later capitalist period, there were only two functions for literature; agitation and propaganda. In 1977, in Literatur und Interesse, Christian Enzensberger discussed the same subject in the context of the student movement and he said that their central point was that the "Schöne Literatur" had lost its socially critical function: "Deshalb sei sie zu ersetzen durch eine agitatorische Literatur, von der eine direkte politische Wirkung ausgehen könnte,"[32] and continued: "Die Kunst ist dazu da, das schlechte Bestehende mit Utopien

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285.

[30] See the foreword to verteidigung der wölfe and the poem from this collection "tragödie."

[31] Hohendahl 286.

[32] Hohendahl 293.

zu überschreiben."[33] Thus Adorno's theory of reality was surpassed by a return to the utopian.

Enzensberger's position in this discourse is roughly as follows. He was convinced that literature had to become more accessible to the public as Marcuse suggested, for it to have any use in a modern society. He was also aware that it had lost its rebellious nature and needed to have this past role restored. He believed that the socalled "Schöne Literatur" was no longer of use in a modern society, and as his brother said, it had become irrelevant. The role of literature lay in the promotion of the utopian, the presentation of the future as it could and should be.

However, the utopia that lies at the root of Enzensberger's poetry, which will be examined in chapter two, does not last throughout his work. Indeed, his two last poetic publications, Der Untergang der Titanic and Die Furie des Verschwindens, represent a gloomy dystopia which certainly seems to mark the end of his hope for some kind of political future. It is also interesting to note that his epic Titanic poem was begun in the late sixties and published in 1978, so the undercurrent of pessimism is evident from a relatively, and surprisingly, early stage in his career. For a critical poet like Enzensberger, who wrote for approximately twenty-five years, it seems curious that he should have ceased to publish poetry in 1980, as though he no longer felt the

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[33] Hohendahl 295.

situation demanded such criticism. His regression from utopia to dystopia seems to indicate less an increased perfection in Germany to render his task obsolete, and more a loss of hope, on the author's part, in its changeability and a possible acceptance of the hopeless enormity of his task.

This thesis will follow the development of Hans Magnus Enzensberger, from beginning to end, in an attempt to establish a continuity of thought in the writer's work, and to determine why the initial hopefulness of his early material changed into an almost apocalyptic pessimism at the end of his publishing career. Many of the answers lie in his essays, and many in his poetry, and in combining the two, much can be learned about an author who united poetry and essayistic prose. Further to this, the thesis will attempt to find a solution to the question of why he stopped using poetry to promote his thoughts, when he had gone to great lengths to defend it from literary theoreticians in the sixties, never forgetting how influential it was on the political stage.

Chapter 2

Enzensberger's Utopian Beginning

In 1957 Hans Magnus Enzensberger published his first collection of poems entitled verteidigung der wölfe.[34] It constituted his first polemical attack on the establishment in Germany during the "Wirtschaftswunder", and, although many of the poems are strikingly negative in nature, it is a negativity born not out of hopelessness but out of destruction and reconstruction of those elements of society not condusive to its progression, such as the press. He is attempting to make apparent the stagnation of German post-war society by identifying what is unsatisfactory, in the hope that once it has been identified it can be removed, replaced or improved. Again the press is a good example of this stagnation as it propagates, in Enzensberger's view, a conservative status quo through disinformation. Simply by enlightening his readership to this fact, Enzensberger begins the process of resistance to it. The apparently negative meanings underlying many of the poems in this collection, such as the title poem "verteidigung der wölfe gegen die lämmer," are a polemical instrument or tool for the eradication of the elements of German society that have become a hindrance to the freedom of the individual within a new country with great potential for true democratic

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[34] Enzensberger, verteidigung der wölfe. Gedichte (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1957).

freedom. Herein lies the essential foundation for Enzensberger's early utopian vision; it is a desire for popular freedom rooted in a criticism of the present but with an all-important view to the future, to be represented by poetry.

This union of the real and the illusory has divided critics into those who are dissatisfied with the intangible utopian nature of the images that Enzensberger is forwarding, such as Klaus Schuhmann, and those who attempt to cement a bond between the two elements of the real and unreal, such as Karla Lydia Schultz. To examine the poems without relativising them into their social contexts is to go against Enzensberger's own comments on the relevance of poetry. Hence, the poems discussed here will be grouped according to the social and political topics of concern to the poet himself, which are namely the state of poetry, the press, the German citizen and the political system. This will serve as a firm foundation for the illustration of Enzensberger's initial poetic aims, before examining his continuity and consistency in later chapters.

The question that is most important to start with is why Enzensberger should attempt to undertake the apparently insurmountable task of finding the new role for the poem that will enlighten an entire nation? In an attempt to understand the motives behind Enzensberger's writing it is of value to examine briefly what Ingeborg Bachmann said in a series of

lectures in Frankfurt in 1959. She asked many questions on the role of the modern writer:

> Warum schreiben? Wozu? Und wozu, seit kein Auftrag mehr da ist von oben und überhaupt kein Auftrag mehr kommt, keiner mehr täuscht. Woraufhin schreiben, für wen sich ausdrücken und was ausdrücken vor den Menschen, in dieser Welt? [...] Und ist der Auftrag, wenn er ihn sich selbst zu geben traut, [...] nicht beliebig, befangen, bleibt er nicht, wie sehr er sich auch bemühen mag, der Wahrheit immer etwas schuldig?[35]

The foreword to his 1957 collection of poems had already gone some way towards answering many of these questions. It reads as follows:

> Hans Magnus Enzensberger will seine Gedichte verstanden wissen als Inschriften, Plakate, Flugblätter, in eine Mauer geritzt, auf eine Mauer geklebt, vor einer Mauer verteilt; nicht im Raum sollen sie verklingen, in den Ohren des einen, geduldigen Lesers, sondern vor den Augen vieler, und gerade der Ungeduldigen, sollen sie stehen und leben, sollen sie wirken wie das Inserat in der Zeitung, das Plakat auf der Litfaßsäule, die Schrift

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[35] Klaus Schuhmann, Weltbild und Poetik (Berlin & Weimar: Aufbau, 1979) 145.

> am Himmel. Sie sollen Mitteilungen sein, hier und jetzt, an uns alle.[36]

Whilst Ingeborg Bachmann was unclear as to the future role of the poet, Enzensberger had already provided a solution to the problems of the poetic mission. He had identified a role for himself and his work by making it active in the social sphere. No longer is poetry or writing to be confined to its traditional, socially inconsequential role, but within it is to be a message relevant to all. The identification of this poetic role is what qualifies Enzensberger to take on this task of developing a new relevance for poetry.

This new role of poetry would be used to target the main barriers to social change, namely the old styles of literature, the press, the political system and the populace who were allowing themselves to be misguided. This intentionally accounted for a broad spectrum of antagonists, essentially due to the fact that all aspects of society had to undergo a revolution to achieve any noteworthy general improvement. Heinrich Vormweg said in 1973 that any revolution that resulted in a superficial alteration in the political or economic situation was simply the act of installing new faces in the old power-structures. They still had to deal with the blind masses.[37] The main barrier to change was a popular

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[36] Enzensberger, verteidigung der wölfe, Vorwort. 1957.

[37] Heinrich Vormweg, "Gedicht und Poetik," Text und Kritik 9/9a (1984): 43.

acceptance of the past and present, and any revolution in society or politics would now have to come from enlightened thought, rather than, traditionally, from a cosmetic political change at the level of government. Hence Enzensberger's poems are to be scrawled on walls, to attempt a change of thinking that will open the eyes of the blind masses and increase general social awareness.

A selection of poems from Enzensberger's first collection of works will clearly show the establishment of his early position and his central antagonists within the society he is attacking, and thus the basis of his utopia.

The first poem is aptly entitled "utopia"[38] and has been much discussed by critics:

> der tag steigt auf mit großer kraft
> schlägt durch die wolken seine klauen
> der milchmann trommelt auf seinen kannen
> sonaten: himmelan steigen die bräutigame
> auf rolltreppen: wild mit großer kraft
> werden schwarze und weiße hüte geschwenkt.
> die bienen streiken. durch die wolken
> radschlagen die prokuristen,
> aus den dachluken zwitschern päpste.
> ergriffenheit herrscht und spott
> und jubel. segelschiffe
> werden aus bilanzen gefaltet.

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[38] Enzensberger, verteidigung 26.

der kanzler schussert mit einem strolch
um den geheimfond. die liebe
wird polizeilich gestattet,
ausgerufen wird eine amnestie
für die sager der wahrheit. (1-17)

It is generally agreed that the poem is a riotous celebration of anarchic freedom. Fair enough, but what purpose does this "jubilant movement of 'up, up and away'"[39] serve? It seems to serve no purpose other than to illustrate a dream; Klaus Schuhmann complained that Enzensberger leaves out any guidelines on how to achieve the aforementioned liberated state of being.[40] However, actual attainment of the utopian state is not the intention behind the poem, indeed, it is a contradiction in terms. It is nothing more than a demonstration, an illustration of a utopia, which is not intended as a feasible option in the selection of future social development. Neither is it, as Karla Lydia Schultz suggests, "tangible reality and we, as bystanders, cheer and hope to join in."[41] It is Enzensberger's presentation of a state of hilarity, where the 'small person', the milkman, for example, has his day, the representatives of social restriction having been pushed aside or ridiculed into meaninglessness. The Popes, businessmen, Chancellor and police

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[39] Schultz 196.

[40] Schuhmann 152.

[41] Schultz 201.

become harmless in a social sphere where those who have been powerless in the past are at last free. The whole structure of power and social standing has evaporated. What remains is contentment and a type of illusory everyday life. It is not tangible because it is not real, and it is impossible to close the gap between the vision and the present because it is a utopia, a place that does not exist outside the poem. It is simply an illusion.

Taking this into consideration, it could quite fairly be asked why Enzensberger wrote it. The answer lies not in looking at the poem as a message in itself, but by examining it in the context of German society in the 1950s. This was a reality of post-war guilt and hence political docility, where the populace, fearing any kind of political participation indulged themselves in increasing prosperity and materialism whilst abstaining from taking any share in the overall control of this wealth. In this poem, the controllers of the wealth and hence society are pushed aside and the ordinary people are allowed to live freely. The dream of this freedom is very much rooted in reality, and, as such, it is highly revolutionary; literally and metaphorically it is an 'uprising.' It is an extreme illustration of what is possible for the average person when he is free and an incitement to work towards this view of the future. The reasoning behind the poem is thus to take the illusory utopia, fuse it with social reality and

provide a stimulus for the reader to act on his own behalf, for his own future.

"Utopia" does not stand on its own, however. It has a sister-poem called "sieg der weichseln,"[42] which mirrors the images present in "utopia" and adds the emotional wherewithal for revolution. Many of the same characters are present; the brides, priests, the common man, and, as representatives of the power structures, the butchers. The happy, lively movement of the first poem has been transformed into an angry inertia; not the inertia born out of hopelessness and confusion but from resolution and steadfastness. The brides now have clenched fists and are determined to attain their goal:

> daß der donner zaudert, so weiß,
> die winzigen fäuste geballt, zur lust
> entschlossen, stehen die bräute, zornig,
> im kirschgarten weiß.
> .....
> eine wut
> ist das glück geworden. angewurzelt
> drohen die bräute. (1-4, 6-8)

The traditionally harmless and innocent image of the bride has changed into a demanding image of freedom; having tasted it in "utopia", they are now prepared to fight for it. The last couplet of the poem indicates the target of the anger:

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[42] Enzensberger, verteidigung 30.

"seufzend verbergen die metzger sich / vor dem wilden Auge der Unschuld" (21-22). The butchers are not violently overthrown in this revolution of innocents, but their guilt is enough; they defeat themselves. They are without further moral justification for being rulers. Enlightenment is a powerful enough revolutionary tool.

One might expect the critic Klaus Schuhmann to step in once again here and point out that revolutions are not instigated by glowering at one's oppressors. Again we are faced with an apparently irrelevant utopian dream. But Karla Lydia Schultz suggests correctly, about the "utopia" poem (which is also relevant to this one) that "it expresses confidence in an instinctual force that can carry revolutions, that can change the wrong state of the here and now to the new, right state of there and tomorrow."[43] The hope and enthusiasm, together with determination, are the elements in man that make Enzensberger's revolution a possibility, although it is still, as yet, in the utopian stage.

In the poem "tragödie,"[44] Enzensberger moves on from the general image of the future and begins to pinpoint individual problems in society, starting with art. The wealthy enjoyment of the theatre with its paper dragons is indicative of the wrong state of (non-utopian) self-delusion that is pervading society. The first stanza shows the shallow nature of art

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[43] Schultz 196.

[44] Enzensberger, verteidigung 20.

devalued for the amusement of those who do not gain any personal reward from it:

mit morgensternen, mit drachen aus grünem papier
mit netten tiraden, säuglingen, kronen und trommeln
zieht das schauspiel über den dünnen teppich der
täuschung
und beizt mit furcht und mitleid die drüsen
von gummigrossisten und fetten witwen,
die in den logen sitzen, duftend
nach eau de cologne und lakritze. (1-7)

The third stanza shows how the great tragic hero runs from the stage to feast himself on exquisite foods, having been totally unaffected by the heroic part he has been playing:

beifall schwemmt den tragiker von der bühne
im frack im regina einen ahnungslosen
fasan zu verspeisen o wundersam
gefüllt mit paradiesischen äpfeln. (14-17)

Between these two stanzas is reality, the real tragedy. The cat starving behind the theatre, the roses in the rubbish and the applecores in the canal are in no way connected to the fat widows, sitting in the loges smelling of licquorice. The art that they are seeing is totally irrelevant to the audience. It means nothing other than a couple of hours of non-reality. It is pure escapism, and as such it is worthless as art.

The lingering smell of licquorice and eau de cologne marks the start of Enzensberger's attack on the so-called

"Schöne Literatur", which, in the Kursbuch[45] of November 1968 culminated in his writing, "wer Literatur als Kunst macht ist damit nicht widerlegt, er kann aber auch nicht mehr gerechtfertigt werden."[46] Literature had to mean something. How were the populus to understand their own situation if art was available only to the rich, and when it was irrelevant to them anyway? Where were the "real" utopian possibilities to come from if not from art, and specifically poetry, Enzensberger's utopian tool? How were they to see these artworks if they were not scrawled on walls and made available?

This theme continued in the poem "niemand singt."[47] This poem is an illustration of the poetless society, where nobody sings (or writes) and it is of little consequence to anybody anyway:

wer fragt nach ihm, wer
nach den mördern, richtet, trauert,
wer klagt über vieles blut und bezeugt
unrecht viel? niemand. niemand singt,
eingenäht in einen sack aus hanf,

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[45] Enzensberger's political publication that acted as a mouthpiece for the student movement in Germany. He remained its editor until 1975.

[46] See Klaus L. Berghahn, "Operative Ästhetik: Zur Theorie der dokumentarischen Literatur," Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965. Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. P.M. Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980): 279.

[47] Enzensberger, verteidigung 61.

niemand sonst, niemand singt aus der flut. (11-16)

Enzensberger's main complaint here is that art has become lazy, and the people indifferent to it, in a society that indulges in material things. It is easier to ignore what is happening around oneself, among the murderers and power-brokers than to participate in change. Here begins an element in Enzensberger's poetry that continues on and reappears in later poems.[48] Enzensberger is here urging people to write, to shout and sing and make themselves be heard. The poetic voice must be resonant if communication and consequently education is to be achieved. This practicality must be overcome before utopias and political reality can be considered.

The next poems "geburtsanzeige" and "option auf ein grundstück" answer the question why things must be changed. What is the utopia for? Why must literature be stirred to educate the masses? What is so inherently wrong with society that leads Enzensberger to envisage such a radical alteration, if not a revolution, in its makeup? In the poem "geburtsanzeige,"[49] in the first and fourth stanzas, Enzensberger writes:

wenn dieses bündel auf die welt geworfen wird
die windeln sind noch nicht einmal gesäumt

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[48] See for example "Ein letzter Beitrag zu der Frage ob Literatur?" from Gedichte 1955-1970 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971) 160.

[49] Enzensberger, verteidigung 65.

der pfarrer nimmt das trinkgeld eh ers tauft
doch seine träume sind längst ausgeträumt
es ist verraten und verkauft (1-5)

noch wiegt es wenig häßlich rot und zart
wieviel es netto abwirft welcher richtsatz gilt
was man es lehrt und was man ihm verbirgt
die zukunft ist vergriffen und gedrillt
es ist verworfen und verwirkt (16-20)

Essentially, man is rated and restricted from birth. Of greatest importance in these two stanzas are that, firstly, the child is affected by the unfulfilled dreams of its mentors. Secondly, and possibly as a result of this, everything that the child will learn, what direction it must take, and what will be concealed from it, in other words its future, is predetermined and dictated to it. Disillusion is thus passed on from generation to generation and freedom and hope disappear in a mass of obligation. This stagnation of future possibilities is what Enzensberger's utopia must overcome. The institutions of education and religion illustrated here are confining to the psychological development of every citizen. The power of these institutions is shown in the hopelessness of adults who submit to them. They in turn form a vicious circle of control and depression that passes through the generations. Both the hold of the institutions and the imprisoning vicious circle must be

broken, and poetry, the illustrator of the future, is the only tool capable of managing such a task.

The poem "option auf ein grundstück"[50] indicates more clearly the effect of this upbringing on an adult desirous of simple freedom. The poem is constructed from opposing voices. Firstly, the individual attempts to break the vicious circle by crying for freedom and expressing confusion in the present state of affairs, and secondly the voice of control that rings out demanding conformity:

> ich wünsche, ich wünsche mit ziegenhirten im regen
> zu kauern
> und mich mit ballerinen und korbmachern zu
> besprechen.
> bete zu den kybernetischen göttern, erwirb
> raketen, börsenblätter und brillen. (5-8)

The two elements are totally unconnected; the urge to conform takes no account of the individual, or in the words of Klaus Schuhmann; "Und dem, der dennoch seine "option auf ein grundstück" -den Anspruch auf seinen eigenen Weltentwurf- vorträgt, fallen mit zunehmender Brutalität die Imperative derer ins Wort, die ihn auffordern, unbesehen mitzumachen."[51] This poem provides an added illustration of why a utopian vision is necessary. It is the only method of escape.

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[50] Enzensberger, <u>verteidigung</u> 68.

[51] Schuhmann 151.

What is inherently wrong with society is that it is not conducive to social behaviour; it is more a system of rulers and the ruled. The role of poetry is to provide illustrations of this state, where choice is restricted by obligation and conformity. Enzensberger's utopia exists to serve this purpose only; to awaken the average person to his own situation. The problem here is, naturally, that the recipient of this poetry, the 'average person', must be willing to be educated and enlightened. Enzensberger realized that the controlling forces within society were so powerful and well-established that to initiate any alteration in it would be highly problematic, as shown in the next poem, "an einen mann in der trambahn."[52]

This poem shows the "average person" in his environment, and what an essentially hopeless situation he is in. It also reflects the poet's distaste for this type of person due to his unresponsive nature and total involvement in his own meaningless life, a life confined to lifts and trams, means of transportation restricted in their movement. The man is mediocre and apparently a lost cause:

> wozu? ich mag nichts wissen von dir, mann
> mit dem wasseraug, mit dem scheitel
> aus fett und stroh, der aktentasche voll käse.
> nein. du bist mir egal. du riechst nicht gut.
> dich gibts zu oft. (1-5)

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[52] Enzensberger, verteidigung 77.

This man is bound to mediocrity and oblivious to anything else, including any form of utopia. The connection between the poet and this man is minimal as a result, and Enzensberger apparently has little hope in his conversion.

The main difference between the two, however, is art. The poet, the "Sager der Wahrheit,"[53] deals in literature, and the "mann in der trambahn" does not, as the poem states in the second stanza. He has no appreciation for the outside world physically, such as the beauty of Lapland, or for the old "lucrez / mit marginalien von der hand diderots." His appreciation of the written word is confined to the newsprint of the gutter press, the literary replacement for the common man and institution of conformity, which Enzensberger deals with in the poem "bild-zeitung."[54]

The man's life is worthless due to his inability to defend himself. He lives in a world of extermination, both of body and mind, murder being present around every corner of his life:

> ich weiß zuviel. ich weiß:
> du wirst bald ermordet werden von einem
> mann der dir gleicht. aber eh der tod
> dich mit seiner jauche netzt, wirst du
> einen mann im aufzug töten, einen wie du
> in der trambahn blindlings... (40-45)

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[53] See Enzensberger, verteidigung, "utopia" line 17.

[54] Enzensberger, verteidigung 80.

The acceptance of such, and the inability to defend oneself against the power of the state could form him into the next secret policeman, knocking on the poet's door (a possible throwback to the Nazi era) to kill for something he does not believe in but lacks the strength to fight against. The poet's consolation is that this man's life is equally worthless, if not more, than his own. He too will disappear without trace, and no-one will care because his life is of no meaning.

> und so denke ich vor dem schlaf an dich
> .....
> ... und sehe, wie du dann, wenig später,
> die maschinenpistole nimmst und mit dem kolben
> an meine tür schlägst, und deswegen,
> und weil ich dich nicht mag, und weil
> du mich überleben wirst kaum einen tag,
> gedenke ich deiner, stinkender bruder. (49, 53-58)

This is the average person for Enzensberger in Germany in the 1950s, and this is the man who must be enlightened.

Why is this man so weak? Why is his political and social, as well as personal character so debilitated, enough to make him unpleasant to the poet who declared his aim to be a "gigantisches Projekt," namely the "politische Alphabetisierung Deutschlands,"[55] in which this man would also presumably be included? The view that Enzensberger takes here

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[55] Hans Egon Holthusen, "Chorführer der Neuen Aufklärung. Über den Lyriker Hans Magnus Enzensberger," Merkur 9 (1980): 897.

is that the blame for ignorance is to be cast onto two central parties. Primarily, they are the holders of power, capable of influencing and debilitating,[56] together with the average person who allows himself to be misinformed and controlled. The main tool available to the powers of control, the "Bewußtseins-Industrie," included all possible means for the control of the human mind. It operated by feeding a continual stream of disinformation to all. This idea of 'mind control' was not introduced into his writings until the 1960s,[57] but already with the publication of his first collection of poems he was acutely aware of its influence. The main target of his attack on this subject was the popular Springer-Verlag mass circulation newspaper, the Bild-Zeitung, something that preoccupied Enzensberger for years to come.[58]

This newspaper's influence was described by Enzensberger in 1983 as follows:

> Der Erfolg der Bild-Zeitung ist beispiellos. In der westlichen Welt existiert keine Tageszeitung mit vergleichbarer Auflage. (Nur die sowjetische und die chinesische Parteipresse kann mit höheren Zahlen aufwarten.) Mit 5,5 Millionen Exemplaren triumphiert

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[56] See "option auf ein grundstück."

[57] with the publication of a series of essays entitled Einzelheiten. See especially vol I: Bewußtseins-Industrie.

[58] See for example: Enzensberger, "Der Triumph der Bild-Zeitung oder die Katastrophe der Presse-Freiheit," Mittelmaß und Wahn, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989): 74-88.

> das Monster aus dem Hause Springer alltäglich über seine Widersacher. Ein Ende dieser Karriere ist nicht abzusehen. Das Blatt ist eine Tatsache, mit der die Bundesrepublik leben muß; unter den Institutionen dieses Landes ist es womöglich diejenige, die sich der Zustimmung der Bevölkerung im höchsten Grade erfreuen darf. Ja, man wird sich fragen müssen, ob es eine Stimme gibt, die das Bewußtsein und die Bewußtlosigkeit der westdeutschen Gesellschaft reiner ausdrückt.... Das Volk hat seine Stimme abgegeben - an Bild.[59]

Even in 1983 the dual responsibility for disinformation is apparent to Enzensberger. As long as the people keep buying the paper, it will continue to feed them trivia, gossip and scandal, a banal replacement for actual news and social changes.[60] That Enzensberger wrote this essay in 1983 shows that the situation had changed little, but in 1957 he saw a problem that had to be publicized.

The problematic newspaper spurred him to write his poem "Bildzeitung", using the same kind of sensational and brief, easily-digested sentence form as a parody of the paper. Present within the poem is the motif of the Grimms' tales with expressions such as "tischlein deck dich." Frank Dietschreit

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[59] Enzensberger, "Bild-Zeitung" 78.

[60] Enzensberger did not confine his attacks to the Bild-Zeitung. In 1957 he attacked Der Spiegel and later the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, another Springer publication.

and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit correctly note that these allusions "holen entlegene Bereiche in die banale Realität des Gedichts, sie spiegeln nicht nur die bundesdeutsche Wirtschaftswunder-Realität als Märchen, sondern entlarven die 'Bildzeitung' als Lügenmärchen."[61] Encapsulated here is Enzensberger's view of what the paper truly is: lies. The poem's first three stanzas are collections of repetitive headline-type exclamations, with the fourth and final stanza bearing the conclusion and indictment of the paper and those foolish enough to buy it:

auch du auch du auch du
wirst langsam eingehn
an lohnstreifen und lügen
reich, stark erniedrigt
durch musterungen und malz-
kaffee, schön besudelt mit straf-
zetteln, schweiß,
atomarem dreck:
deine lungen ein gelbes riff
aus nikotin und verleumdung
möge die erde dir leicht sein
wie das leichentuch
aus rotation und betrug
das du dir täglich kaufst
in das du dich täglich wickelst. (25-39)

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[61] Dietschreit, Heinze-Dietschreit 15.

The last two lines show especially how the poet casts fault on the people who buy the paper, the type of "mann in der trambahn" whose world perspective is brought to him by those who would like to keep him harmless and ignorant. This highly polemical poem marks the beginning of Enzensberger's attack on those who would foster the stagnant status quo in German society.

To reinforce his point about the all-too-willing victims of such everyday social delusion, he wrote the poem "verteidigung der wölfe gegen die lämmer."[62] Here Enzensberger provides an enraged attack on conformity and its ensuing weakness. Those who are ruled long to be ruled, to fawn to the rulers for approval, to cast themselves before the wolves like sheep to be molested and attacked. Is it any surprise, asks the poet, that the minority can control the majority? Where is the so-called democratic nature of Germany where the people are supposed to be the rulers? Independence, individuality and political awareness have all been subdued by the levers of power, such as the press.

Enzensberger's poetic technique in this poem is to appear to side with those in power against the weak and the ruled, but as Alfred Andersch said in 1958, "die spezielle Richtung von Enzensbergers Kritik richtet sich übrigens ebenso gegen die Opfer der Macht wie gegen die Mächtigen selbst. Er wirft den Mißbrauchten ihre Lethargie vor. Fast haßt er die Hinnahme

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[62] Enzensberger, verteidigung 90.

des Mißbrauchs mehr als den Mißbrauch selbst.... Enzensberger stellt sich nicht auf die Seite der Macht, nur weil er die sich ihr Beugenden verachtet."[63] In a mock defence of power he can attack both institutions and willing victims. Herein lies the ironic power of the poem which concludes:

gelobt sein die räuber: ihr,
einladend zur vergewaltigung,
werft euch aufs faule bett
des gehorsams. winselnd noch
lügt ihr. zerrissen
wollt ihr werden. ihr
ändert die welt nicht. (34-40)

Enzensberger is attempting to heighten his readers' awareness of individuality in a country where the individual was allegedly the ruler, but where his actual power had been dissipated by a barrage of disinformation. The greater the self-awareness, the greater the resistance to submit to pressure, and the greater the possibility of changing the world for the better.

In this first collection of poems Enzensberger makes known his political ideas and formulated various arguments against the system. These were mainly directed against the monolithic institutions in society, their tools of persuasion and control, and the willingness of the populace to accept

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[63] Alfred Andersch, "1 (in Worten: ein) zorniger junger Mann," Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970) 12.

them. He did not omit the poet in his criticism, the one social character capable of seeing through the nebulous fog around the distribution of information who had ceased to be of any socially critical function. The poet must return to his role as educator and illustrator and be a "Sager der Wahrheit." Enzensberger was not alone in his discontent, but represented much of left-wing thinking at the time. Helmut Müller explains that his poems arrived in German literary circles just when the German Economic Miracle was at its first highpoint:

> die linke Intelligenz in der Bundesrepublik empfand ein tiefes Unbehagen über diese Entwicklung, sie sprach von Restauration. Enzensberger verlieh in seinen Gedichten dem Zeitgefühl des Zorns Ausdruck, das bei den kritischen Intellektuellen vorherrschte. Die politische Kritik an der Restaurationsgesellschaft verband sich bei Enzensberger mit einer Kritik an der zeitgenössischen Literatur, die sich in den Augen des Autors als 'Kunst' von der gesellschaftlichen Realität entfernt hatte.[64]

In this one collection of poems Enzensberger provides a "dichterischen Auftrag": the provision of a utopia, a hope that has relevance for the mediocre reality of the present. He calls on poets to write and "sing out" for the purposes of

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[64] Müller 236.

enlightenment, and to fight the tools of the "Bewußtseins-Industrie," such as the Bild-Zeitung. This new poetic mission is to educate the apathetic average citizen, and awaken them to the need for his participation in the society which he belongs to, and should be controlling. Literature, as was seen in the poem "tragödie," had to be made relevant to this average person and not be hidden away, available only to the disinterested rich. Not only must the average person have access to this art, but it must in itself be relevant to his situation. Thus the days of "Schöne Literatur" were in the past. Poetry and art would now have to have an immediate effect, which Enzensberger had achieved himself. As Klaus Schuhmann said: "dieser Lyriker [schreibt und arbeitet] nicht für die 'Ewigkeit'..., sondern 'hier und jetzt'."[65]

Enzensberger, at this point in his career, was an illustrator, shining a spotlight on the social and political inadequacies in Germany in its period of financial growth. Although his poems are cuttingly critical of many aspects of the society he lived in, he was not at this time attempting to do anything other than awaken people from their political sleep. When Günter Grass called Enzensberger naive for expecting revolution in Germany in 1968[66], it was Grass who was wrong; ten years before he would probably have been correct, but awaiting Germany was the Grand Coalition of 1965

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[65] Schuhmann 153.

[66] See Chapter I, p3.

and the US-Vietnam war, which stirred people to find their voices. Enzensberger had appeared at a perfect moment to encourage uprising, providing his curious visions of the future and his utopia. These provided an encouragement to previously apathetic citizens to demonstrate their feelings, something almost entirely new to the West. As Andersch said, " dieser eine hat geschrieben, was es in Deutschland seit Brecht nicht mehr gegeben hat: das große politische Gedicht....mit diesen 18 Gedichten hat er einer Generation Sprache verliehen, die, sprachlos vor Zorn, unter uns lebt."[67]

Enzensberger could supply visions of hope and the future, but he was not the 'poet as priest' from the past. This he demonstrated by leaving Germany after publishing his poems and touring the USA and Mexico, returning not to his homeland but to Stranda in Norway where he lived for almost three years, followed by a year in Lanuvio near Rome. Following this break he eventually returned and continued to publish his polemical material, as the 1960s brought with them greater political participation from the "blind masses."

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[67] Andersch, "1 (in Worten: ein)" 13.

Chapter 3

Poetry and Politics

Having established his critical position with his first volume of poems, Enzensberger proceded to publish three more volumes of his work in rapid succession in the early 1960s. These were landessprache (1960), and blindenschrift (1964), both collections of poetry, and Einzelheiten, a two-volume collection of essays in 1962. During this period various political events took place that altered the attitude of many of the hitherto docile Germans towards the state of their society. The stationing of nuclear weapons on German soil and the Federal Republic's policies towards the DDR (which essentially consisted not of accepting its sovereignty but attempting to reunify the two states, part of the reason for the consolidation of the borders in 1961) served to undermine the credibility of the government. Outside Germany, the American intervention in the hitherto French conflict in Vietnam ignited a moral outcry that grew throughout the decade.

These political events, although increasing the numbers of critics of the state, did not alter the general apathetic nature of the populace. As a result, Enzensberger discarded the general criticism of the state so obvious in verteidigung der wölfe, and in his second volume of poems he concentrated

on the character of the Germans, and continued to attack the weakness of the individual with his poetry.

Enzensberger's continued assault on the character of the Germans divides critics into two differing groups. Alfred Andersch noted that the joyous, hopeful images of Enzensberger's first poems had given way to a pessimistic vision of a people incapable of protecting their own interests[68]. Opposing this view are those who stress the continued poetic strength of the works, paying less attention to their content and concentrating more on the increased polemical intensity and its effect.[69] They claimed that simply because Enzensberger's poetry is no longer rapturous and lively does not necessarily denote loss of hope on the poet's part; he has simply intensified his attack. This second argument does, however stand on weak foundations. What undermines it most is Enzensberger's undeniably pessimistic attitude, and this coupled with the temporary abandonment of poetry in favour of prose essays in 1962, seems to indicate a certain stagnation not only in his subject-matter but also in his confidence in poetry itself, his hopeful utopian tool.

This chapter will view the development of Enzensberger's thought in his next three works, firstly by examining the

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[68] Alfred Andersch, "'landessprache'," Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 69.

[69] For example: Frank Dietschreit and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit.

continuity of his attacks on society in landessprache, and then by addressing the question of why he published Einzelheiten. Following this apparent abandonment of poetry, his subsequent poetic work blindenschrift will be examined to determine the effect of the mixture of poetry and essays and the consistency of ideas throughout his alternation between the different literary media.

The title-poem of the collection, "landessprache"[70] is a furious return to poetry for Enzensberger after his three-year pause. He reappears with a cutting criticism of Germany and the Germans, a lost people with a divided nation and, in the West, revelling in a new-found wealth that is the indicator of social importance for the individual. Germany is a country where capital is the ruler, where money is a convenient distraction from the realities of the divided society. Purchasing-power is still the replacement for political power. The surrendering of individuality in exchange for the amassing of wealth, together with the popular conviction, or self-delusion, that everything is going well, an idea fostered by the press, all conjoin to give the impression of a country consisting solely from small, unpleasant annoyances; "das kleinere übel" denotes almost everything in the poem, including premature hair-loss from stress and the fact that everyone is mercilessly nice to each

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[70] Enzensberger, landessprache. Gedichte (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1960) 7-13.

other. However, everything is tolerated apathetically. It is a place of increasing wealth and human stagnation, and causes the poet to cry out:

hier geht es aufwärts,
hier ist gut sein,
wo es rückwärts aufwärts geht,
hier schießt der leitende herr den leitenden herrn
mit dem gesangbuch ab,
hier führen die leichtbeschädigten mit den
schwerbeschädigten krieg,
hier heißt es unerbittlich nett zueinander sein,

und das ist das kleinere übel,
das wundert mich nicht,
das nehmen die käufer in kauf,
hier, wo eine hand die andere kauft,
hand aufs herz, hier sind wir zuhaus.... (27-37)

The first two lines of this stanza read like self-delusory clichées, a vain attempt at self-persuasion in an effort to justify the material way of life. There is however no justification. The country is not progressing and the individual is not becoming any freer. The people are still "ganz gewöhnliche tote Leute."[71]

In this poem, the old question of the poet's role surfaces once more. The poem is a cacophony of unheard voices,

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[71] Enzensberger, "landessprache" line 73.

not only of the poet but also of the 'dead' populace, who cry from below, trying to make themselves heard through "schalldichte pflaster" of their prison, their country. This is also the poet's dilemma. He calls out but is not heard, a problem that prompts him to ask, "was soll ich sagen? / in welcher sprache? und wem?" What is the poet's role if he has no audience? This is naturally a purely rhetorical question; the poem itself indicates that Enzensberger's role as illustrator of social problems, such as popular apathy, is still strong. In spite of this apathy there is still an obvious concern evident in the poem that indifference to literature and its subsequent power of enlightenment is dangerous to the future of the poet himself. Furthermore, the threat is not confined to the West: there are also unheard voices emanating from the DDR, suppressed by the party newspaper Neues Deutschland, the conservative equivalent of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in the Federal Republic. This suppression of voices, or opinions, Enzensberger calls a "mundtotes würgen, das nichts von sich weiß" (140).

The striking element of this poem is its obvious air of disappointment and disillusion. The theme of the apathetic citizen that Enzensberger introduced in verteidigung der wölfe was embedded in a utopian hope for the future, and although in fact the average person was disinterested in his or her own affairs, socially and politically, there was at least the hope that they would reawaken with the poet's help. Now, the people

are no longer even alive, and the poet appears displaced. The view to the future has evaporated and life is now firmly tied to the present.

Although the poet appears to have been displaced, the role that Enzensberger founded for himself is still very much alive. Within this poem he conceals many parodies of traditional poetry, suggesting that his attack on "Schöne Literatur" is continuing, and that he therefore sees a future for his new socially-relevant poetry. Among these attacks, Rilke is targeted more than once. For example, in Rilke's "Seventh Elegy" he writes "hiersein ist herrlich" Enzensberger alters the meaning of the words entirely when he writes:

> wo aus ruinen sprossen,
> nagelneu, ruinen auf vorrat, auf raten,
> auf abruf, auf widerruf:
> hiersein ist herrlich. (41-44)

Furthermore, Hölderlin, the nineteenth-century 'poet-as-priest' does not escape. From his work Enzensberger takes "O heilig Herz der Völker, o Vaterland!", and transforms it into "deutschland, mein land, unheilig herz der völker."[72] Thus, in spite of his apparent ennui towards the state of German society, Enzensberger continues to parody and weaken older forms of poetry and thereby strengthen the new, indicating that he did indeed see a future for the modern poet.

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[72] For these and other examples of Enzensberger's parodies see: Frank Dietschreit and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit 26.

However, the problem of the socially-relevant poet had not changed since 1957. For poetry to be of any value it had to be read and consumed, as was stated in the foreword to verteidigung der wölfe. This collection of poems has a similar foreword and reads: "Diese Gedichte sind Gebrauchsgegenstände, nicht Geschenkartikel im engeren Sinne.... Der Leser wird höflich ermahnt, zu erwägen, ob er ihnen beipflichten oder widersprechen möchte."[73] This is an invitation to the reader to become involved in what he is reading, to comment in any way, to agree or disagree. Enzensberger is attempting to initiate thought-processes that will lead to a critical analysis of the poems, and through them, the country. Hence they are "Gebrauchsgegenstände," things to be used. This also constitutes a further undermining of "Schöne Literatur" where the reader is a passive admirer. The theory of the reader's response and criticism is sound: the poet writes, the reader analyses and responds.

The problem with this theory is, as with any theory, its transfer into practice, into reality. That the two main bodies of poetry in this volume are subtitled "gedichte für die gedichte nicht lesen" and "oden an niemand" would seem to suggest that the connection between poet and reader is not being made. Furthermore, many of the poems in landessprache are very pensive, in striking contrast to the vociferous cries

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[73] See Frank Dietschreit and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit 22.

and demands of verteidigung der wölfe. It seems he has withdrawn into personal pessimism, quite a change from his past, joyous utopia. Commenting on the new reflective mood of the poems, Ingrid Eggers says:

> der Kommunikationsanspruch der Gebrauchsanweisung [wird] radikal in Frage gestellt, die Überschriften bezeichnen auch treffend das Dilemma dieser Gedichte: die gesellschaftlichen Probleme sind soweit verabsolutiert, daß sie unüberwindbar geworden sind; die entsprechende Darstellungsweise ist der Monolog. Wenn die Welt nicht mehr zu verändern ist, hat der Dialog, besonders der aufklärende Dialog, keine Funktion mehr.[74]

The difficulty of communication between the poet and the reader is a possible indication that Enzensberger was realizing that poetry was not the right means of communication after all.

In the poem "gedicht für die gedichte nicht lesen,"[75] Enzensberger continues to attack the apathetic Germans, together with the power-structures that make use of their inability to take interest in their own affairs. Within the poem is also the feeling that the poet's voice is not loud enough to break through the cacophony of the bureaucrats, a problem compounded by the readership's inability to read:

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[74] Eggers 40.

[75] Enzensberger, landessprache 33.

und das geheul, das meine worte
verschlingt? es sind die amtlichen
schmierigen adler, die orgeln
durch den entgeisterten himmel,
um uns zu behüten.
von lebern,
meiner und deiner, zehren sie,
leser, der du nicht liest. (25-32)

Where is the role of the poet if nobody is a reader? What is the point of polemical attacks on the state if the populace is content to suffer its social mismanagement? The answer is simply that the polemical poet has no role whatsoever. The tragedy of this apathy is not only that it is displacing poetry, but that it is ruining Germany too. It is this apathy that allowed the stationing of nuclear weapons on German soil, and which, shortly thereafter, in 1961, led to the final, conclusive division of German society with the construction of the Berlin Wall.

The motif of the Germans being dead is continued in the poem "die scheintoten,"[76] where people, through lack of personal interest in their own society, have been reduced to automata, victims of bureaucracy and the government office. The first four stanzas are an illustration of the tedium of their lives, the regimentation and lack of actual freedom in a country supposedly built on a foundation of individual

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[76] Enzensberger, landessprache 17.

liberty. Their lives have been totally absorbed by the state to the extent that they need somebody to perform the basic functions of life for them. The happy aspects of life are absent: it is a mundane drudgery. The fifth stanza contains a series of rhetorical questions indicating the total inability of the general public to do anything for themselves:

> wer aber gibt ihnen küsse und äpfel?
> wer weckt sie denn, wer gibt ihnen allerdings
> immortellen, wer schaufelt von ihrer brust
> diese gebirge von qualm, wer wickelt sie
> aus den zeitungen, salzt ihre essenden münder
> mit mut, wer kämmt die asche aus ihrem haar,
> wer wäscht die furcht aus ihren beiden farblosen
> augen,
> wer schenkt, löst, zaubert, salbt und weckt
> die scheintoten von den toten auf,
> und wer spricht sie frei? (25-34)

Who is it who can lift them out of the monotony of their lives if not the poet, and how can the poet perform his duties of enlightenment and illustration if he is not read?

The poem "blindlings"[77] provides an excellent illustration of the short-sightedness of the Germans and its consequent effect on the socio-political structures:

> siegreich sein
> wird die sache der sehenden

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[77] Enzensberger, landessprache 22.

die einäugigen
haben sie in die hand genommen
die macht ergriffen
und den blinden zum könig gemacht (1-6)

This first stanza encapsulates Enzensberger's message perfectly. The healthy, capable people give their power over to one-eyed bureaucrats who instal their blind leader. In return, they are made powerless, and become the living dead of "die scheintoten":

anständige bürger aber trauen
mit rücksicht auf die verhältnisse
ihren augen nicht
streuen sich pfeffer und salz ins gesicht
betasten weinend die sehenswürdigkeiten
und erlernen die blindenschrift (25-30)

"Anständige Bürger" they most certainly are not. They are too foolish even to trust that which they can see, they rub their eyes with the blinding salt of the press and lose sight of the truth, even when it is written in braille. They have perfected the art of self-delusion.

That the people allow themselves to be ruled by the blind permits the rulers to act without any great hindrance. One consequence of this free hand was the controversial stationing of nuclear weapons in Germany, albeit under the control of the American military. Enzensberger deals with the nuclear threat

in his poem "an alle fernsprechteilnehmer."[78] It is interesting to note here how reminiscent the invisible and insidious spread of radiation is of the growth of political power, as though the two were related. Indeed, the threat of radioactive pollution is a result of the strength of the government and the weakness of the people and possible only because "die minderzahl hat die mehrheit, / die toten sind überstimmt"(14-15). In an attempt to establish some kind of resistance to the nuclear threat Enzensberger distributed a leaflet called "Vorschläge für Atomwaffen-Gegner"[79] that called for a huge public protest. This poem added to the weight of the poet's own protest action, but the leaflet itself is an acknowledgement of the restricted readership of poetry. Nevertheless, the poem should not be ignored:

es ist etwas in der luft, klebrig
und zäh, etwas, das keine farbe hat
(nur die jungen aktien spüren es nicht):
gegen uns geht es, gegen den seestern
und das getreide. und wir essen davon
und verleiben uns ein etwas zähes,
und schlafen im blühenden boom,
im fünfjahresplan, arglos
schlafend im brennenden hemd,
wie geiseln umzingelt von einem zähen,

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[78] Enzensberger, landessprache 28.

[79] Dietschreit, Heinze-Dietschreit 21.

farblosen, einem gedunsenen schlund. (27-37)

The somnolent passivity of those in the west enjoying their wealth, and those in the GDR with their reassuring Five Year Plan, is a type of indirect permission for the power-structures to pollute the land. Indeed, this security is so blinding that the Germans cannot feel their own clothes on fire.

Having examined selected poems from this collection, it is still not entirely clear what Enzensberger's views on the situation of the poet in Germany were. His poems are indicative of the continuation of the fundamental themes that he started with in 1957, and show that there are still social and political problems to be faced, such as the nuclear question. However, whether they should be confronted from a poet's standpoint, using poetry that has a tendency to preach to the converted, is Enzensberger's dilemma. The new trend in his poems dealing with the audibility of the poet and the inability of the readership to read, suggest a poet doubting his own actual effect. The Andersch view that Enzensberger had succumbed to total pessimism is not entirely accurate, but neither is the view that his poetry still possesses the same critical strengths as in 1957; the change to introspection is indicative of that.

It would, however, be too simple to say that Enzensberger's poetry had changed from being hopeful and clearly audible in 1957 to being a series of pessimistic,

inaudible complaints in 1960. The poem "an alle fernsprechteilnehmer" shows clearly enough that the poet is not totally consumed with his own poetic mission; he is still capable of addressing problems outside the social role of the poet. Furthermore, his continued criticism of the traditional aesthetic styles of poetry in "landessprache" indicate a consolidation of his conviction that his new style would be of future relevance and use. Certainly there is a noticeable change from the provision of a utopian future to the preoccupation with a stagnating present; his apparent disillusion with the German people seems to render utopias impossible. Klaus Schuhmann even went so far as to accuse Enzensberger of indulging in poems consisting of little more than outbursts of fury and tirades of hate that burnt out quickly after having had only a fleeting effect. He said, "dieser Prozeß geht mit der Zurücknahme des politischen Auftrags einher, den er sich einst gegeben hat."[80] This opinion is very difficult to justify. Although the poems of landessprache are noticeably more vehement in their attacks than those in his previous collection, the theme of German passivity is exactly the same. The method also differs very little; it is still a frontal attack. That the popular mood was still unchanged after three years, since 1957, and that the apathy was allowing the government of the Federal Republic such an obvious free hand, simply required, in the realm of

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[80] Schuhmann 154.

Enzensberger's poetic reflection, a more violent attack. It is too simplistic to consider that Enzensberger's motives stem from any such unproductive emotions as hate, and that his poems have the air of ill-considered tirades. Furthermore, that he was willing to abandon poetry temporarily and attempt to find a greater audience in prose hardly indicates a withdrawal from any political role he may have chosen in the past. Contrary to Schuhmann's claims, it appears that the political messages to be delivered are still of greatest importance to Enzensberger, more so even than the poetic means. In spite of his pessimistic poetry, Enzensberger is still communicating the same messages.

The question that does arise out of Enzensberger's pessimistic mood is that of his consistency. His topics and themes change little and their continuity between the two volumes published thus far can be easily observed. Does his abandonment of poetry, however, even on a temporary basis, compromise his poetic role? It is of course not forbidden for a poet to write prose, and he indicates in the context of poetological considerations, in his parodying of Rilke and Hölderlin, for example, that a future for his poetry does indeed exist. What troubles Enzensberger is, however, captured by Heinrich Vormweg, who commented on the poet's defection to the essay in the following way:

> Die relative Ungreifbarkeit, die Indirektheit jener politischen Folgen, die ein Gedicht noch und

> tatsächlich haben kann, provozierte ihn dazu, von der Poesie mehr und mehr abzusehen und auf eine Revolution in der Politik zu setzen.... Enzensberger selbst forderte, sich lieber mit Schreibarten zu beschäftigen, die inhaltliche politische Wirkungen haben könnten.[81]

Enzensberger was still a long way from abandoning poetry completely and yet what Vormweg says here seems to point in the right direction. Enzensberger, in his first move away from poetry, is looking for an alternative to deliver his messages. With this intention, the best way to analyse the justifiability of his progression to the essay is to examine the communicative function of the essays and their significance for his poems. Therein will lie the answer to whether his apparently inconsistent move to the essay form is reasonable.

The two-volume collection of essays published in 1962 and entitled Einzelheiten was Enzensberger's first prose illustration of the views that he had tried to formulate in his poetry. That there is a link between the poems and essays there is little doubt, as Karl-Heinz Bohrer said in 1978: "die politische Lyrik Hans Magnus Enzensbergers hatte immer engste Verwandschaft mit dem kulturkritischen Essay."[82] The

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[81] Vormweg 39.

[82] Karl-Heinz Bohrer, "Getarnte Anarchie. Zu Hans Magnus Enzensberger's 'Untergang der Titanic'," Merkur 32.2 (1978): 1275.

connection is clear in the essay "Poesie und Politik" wherein Enzensberger investigates the history of the contact between poetry and politics. He comes to a threefold conclusion on the role of the modern poem. Firstly, he suggests that the poem must be totally incorrupt, refusing all domination from politics or anywhere else, and that it must speak out on those subjects that are not spoken of. He says that a poem commissioned, that is, a poem that offers itself for sale, is condemned to death, for its source comes not from within the poem but from the outside. It is therefore corrupt. Secondly, due to the uncontrollable nature of poetry, governmental authority sees it as being anarchistic, as the reader's interpretation is wholly unpredictable and uncontrollable. Thus it is the perfect tool for political criticism as politics cannot influence the individual's interpretation. Lastly, Enzensberger claims that poetry presents the future, and that it transcends the present by examining what is obvious and yet unrealized.[83] Although he gives no examples he seems to be suggesting that poetry should look to the future as a fund of possibilities.

Enzensberger is presenting, in a clear format, the determining factors underlying the poems he has written and is yet to write. His striving for the independent, anarchistic portrayal of the future, explained clearly in essay form, is an enormous assistance in the comprehension of his poetry.

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[83] Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 135-137.

This essay, then, is an augmentation of his poems, and far less a deviation from his initial intentions, his self-appointed political role.

In the second volume of Einzelheiten, Enzensberger wrote an essay entitled "Bewußtseins-Industrie,"[84] which explained why an on-going criticism of the state was necessary. From an historical point of view, the poet examines the development of the so-called "industrialisation of the mind." He explains that in the past, authority could govern simply by using coercion. That is no longer enough. Since the popular realisation that everyone should have a say in their own destinies and society, political authority was forced to justify itself to the people it ruled. It therefore had to influence people's minds. It managed this by the industrialisation of information including the press and the other media which were the lifelines of the people to the outside world and to each other. Information became an industry and had to sell its products whether news existed or not. But the main business of this "mind industry" was not, as Enzensberger says, to sell itself or anything else; it existed simply to preserve the status quo and the domination of man by man. It was essentially an insidious form of psychological coercion.

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[84] Enzensberger, Einzelheiten II. Poesie und Politik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1964) 7-17.

Enzensberger said that the abolition of this mind-controlling process is impossible because it would mean the destruction of industry itself, which would be suicidal. The only way to defeat it is to join it, to use the same methods it is using. For Enzensberger's method of "mind control" he uses poetry.

The content of this essay makes clear where the frustration of landessprache stems from. The obvious exploitation of the Germans and their total inability to listen to the voice of the enlightening poet Enzensberger finds galling. To ignore poetry, which, in the words of Reinhard Baumgart, appears like a "deus ex machina"[85] to comfort and protect, is a victory for the "Bewußtseins-Industrie," for the oppressed are defending their oppressors and rejecting enlightenment. The monsters of the Springer printing-presses are seeking, in the words of "landessprache," to preserve a country that is moving upwards but not forwards.

The clarity of these and other essays in the Einzelheiten anthology is a great assistance in understanding Enzensberger's poetry of the 1960s. That they complement his poetry rather than constituting an interruption is fairly clear, and the success of the poem-essay combination spoke for itself. Within a year, 15,000 copies had been printed, showing that there was indeed a greater readership for prose. It had

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[85] Reinhart Baumgart, "Enzensberger kämpft mit Einzelheiten," Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 136.

taken three years for landessprache to sell 10,000 copies. That Enzensberger used these essays to promote poetry also no doubt increased the readership of his subsequent poetic volumes. Such was the success of this combination that from this point on he alternated between poetry and essays, until the end of his publishing career.

Enzensberger spent most of the years between 1961 and 1964 in Norway and the Soviet Union: his renewed withdrawal from Germany, coupled with the publication of his essays, led to some surprise when, in 1964, he published blindenschrift. This collection of poems marks a noticeable change in the style of Enzensberger's writing, reflecting what he said in the essay "Poesie und Politik," that poetry should discuss those things that are generally not discussed, such as a tree or a stone.[86] That there was a narrowing of perspective between the general political attacks of verteidigung der wölfe and the more specific examination of the Germans in landessprache has already been noted. In blindenschrift too, there is another such narrowing of perspective, to the examination of single elements of one person's life, such as the lawnmower in the poem "freizeit."[87] There is also a noticeable dissipation of the anger so obvious in the poems of landessprache. Peter Schneider attributes this mood-change

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[86] Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 136.

[87] Enzensberger, blindenschrift. Gedichte (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1964) 31.

to the essays Enzensberger had written, which, he says, have absorbed the poet's aggression and which leave the poems to concentrate on points of specific importance, such as a lawnmower fighting the ever-growing grass.[88] In short, he is now finding a balance to relieve the demands he had placed upon his poetry in the past. In fact, the gentle tone of these poems even caused Heise to suggest that Enzensberger was at last turning to "real poetry,"[89] and Schonhauer went so far as to see this collection as marking the end of Enzensberger as a poet altogether.[90] In this he was not entirely wrong, for this was the last collection of poems Enzensberger was to write for seven years.

The mood of the poet has, and in this the critics are united, changed considerably. Enzensberger's physical withdrawal to Norway is reflected in his poems as a "Rückzug auf sich selbst,"[91] and they have a much softer tone than those in landessprache. Enzensberger continues with his introspection, and also in his withdrawal from main-stream political criticism. The individual, rather than the German people, are now of more interest, and yet there is still a tendency to dwell on the efficacy of poetry. The poet's mood,

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[88] Peter Schneider, "'Blindenschrift'," Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, ed. Joachim Schickel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 109.

[89] Dietschreit, Heinze-Dietschreit 34.

[90] Dietschreit, Heinze-Dietschreit 35.

[91] Dietschreit, Heinze-Dietschreit 34.

as described by Hermann Korte,[92] is that of "Geschichtspessimismus," a loss of hope in himself and poetry. The pessimism with which Andersch branded landessprache is infinitely clearer here, especially in the poem "schattenwerk,"[93] which concludes:

> und ich bin ein schatten
> den andere schatten
> der zukunft entgegenwerfen
> anderen nächten
> anderen gesichtern
> neuen werken zu
>
> schatten sind meine werke (21-27)

Even the poetic portrayal of the future is undermined here, one of the three positive attributes prerequisite to the poem, that Enzensberger pinpointed only two years before in "Poesie und Politik."[94]

The first poem in the collection is entitled "küchenzettel,"[95] and reflects the new, narrower perspective that Enzensberger has adopted. The title of the first section of poems is "camera obscura," and there is indeed the feeling

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[92] Hermann Korte, Geschichte der deutschen Lyrik seit 1945 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989) 113.

[93] Enzensberger, blindenschrift 92.

[94] Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 136-7.

[95] Enzensberger, blindenschrift 7.

of looking through a hidden camera at one tiny aspect of the world. In this poem, the camera is looking around three kitchen doors, observing what is within. The three views, in the poet's own house, in a painting in Amsterdam and in a summer-house on the Moskva, are all very alike. On the respective kitchen tables are a telegram, a letter and a newspaper, all of which remain unread. The contents common to each kitchen, such as the cat's bowl, are clear indicators of how similar life is in the west and east, and, as represented by the painting and the memories of historical events, how similar life now is to how it has always been. People are the same wherever one looks, even in the past.

The other unifying strand throughout the first three stanzas is the presence of the telegram, letter and newspaper, all bearers of information that are unread. This represents the continuation of Enzensberger's ongoing theme of the public being weak readers. His message is now that much more serious because he universalises this weak trait by looking to the past and finding the same disinterest there. Also clear here is the development in the mood of the poet who has altered his perspective from the future, in his first volume, through the present in <u>landessprache</u> to the past in this poem. His final judgement on the past comes in the last stanza:

durch die offene küchentür
seh ich vergossene milch
dreißigjährige kriege

tränen auf zwiebelbrettern
anti-raketen-raketen
brotkörbe
klassenkämpfe. (22-28)

The result of ignoring information in the past as well as the present is the source of social unrest, war or hunger. The combination of past and present is indicative of the lack of hope the poet feels in any possible alteration of the state of voluntary popular ignorance in the future. There seems to be no reason now why people should take any more interest in their lives than in the past.

That people should continue to be disinterested is doubly disappointing for Enzensberger, both in his relevance as a poet and in the fact that a future to be apathetic in is no longer a certainty. Enzensberger's protest against the nuclear threat continues in the poem "countdown."[96] The danger is invisible, hidden, but the ten-second countdown is possible at any time:

hundert klafter tief in der erde
hundert faden tief im meer
zählt jener dort unsre sekunden
von zehn bis null. (1-4)

The future is so uncertain that there is no longer reason to write of utopias or of optimistic possibilities. The nuclear

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[96] Enzensberger, blindenschrift 47.

threat has rendered everything unpredictable, leading to a rather pitiful view of the future, and time itself:

meine pfeife brennt eine halbe stunde
wenn sie nicht ausgeht.
mein kopf ist noch gut
für ungefähr dreißig jahre.
der nagel den ich in die wand schlage
hält doppelt so lang.
was ich hier schreibe vergilbt
wenn es nicht feuer fängt
ungelesen, vielleicht erst
in sehr fernen zeiten.
die steinerne schwelle
verwittert nicht leicht.

Everything has been relativised by time. Age and longevity are immaterial when faced with total destruction at only a moment's notice. Poetry is one of the victims of this immediacy of time. There is no place for that which portrays a future if there is going to be none. From the apparent relinquishing of his poetic role, it is easy to see how Schonhauer could predict the end of Enzensberger as a poet.

Schonhauer could have used the next poem as further proof of his theory. Its title, "erinnerung an die sechziger jahre,"[97] is certainly curious, bearing in mind it was still only 1964. It seems to indicate that the decade is already

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[97] Enzensberger, blindenschrift 64-5.

over for Enzensberger, at least in terms of his usefulness as a poet. The poem reflects the hope with which "we" entered into the decade:

heiter mit liebe und arbeit
beschäftigt, furchtlos
beschäftigt mit unserer furcht,
ruhig mit unserer unruhe,
sorglos beschäftigt
mit unseren sorgen

entglitten wir,
flogen, landeten,
noch einmal waren die ufer offen. (1-9)

However, the expectations were not fulfilled, as the last stanza of the poem illustrates:

die felsen dort,
unwissend furchtlos
überflüssig ruhig
unbarmherzig heiter:
die felsen sind noch am leben. (30-34)

Whether intentionally or not, Enzensberger has written a poem here that reflects his own career thus far. An enthusiastic beginning and subsequent disillusion is exactly what happened to him, and there is no solution, at least at the present time.

The final comment that Enzensberger passes on the nature of poetry before his seven-year pause is rather fatalistic. The poem "windgriff"[98] compares words to poplar seeds that are taken by the wind and which will only maybe grow into a tree, which will only maybe cast a shadow; there is no certainty:

manche wörter
leicht
wie pappelsamen

steigen
vom wind gedreht
sinken

schwer zu fangen
tragen weit
wie pappelsamen

manche wörter
lockern die erde
später vielleicht

werfen sie einen schatten
einen schmalen schatten ab
vielleicht auch nicht (1-15)

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[98] Enzensberger, blindenschrift 88.

This is an intensely pensive poem written not out of polemical aggression to stir the populus to read, as in the past. It is pure statement, written introspectively, showing a realisation of the uncontrollable nature of poetry. Perhaps it is this very uncontrollable aspect of poetry more than anything that caused him to leave it in favour of prose essays and the Kursbuch which he founded in 1965, which had a greater influence on the contentious elements he still sought to attack.

The years 1957 to 1964 mark the first chapter in Enzensberger's career, starting out hopefully and ending somewhat pessimistically. The changes of mood in his works reflect the difficulty of the task he set himself, the "Alphabetisierung Deutschlands." Whether he has been consistent throughout this period is a twofold question, divided into the two elements of poetic mood and subject matter. There can be little doubt that his poetic mood has not been a constant in his work. Even the motivating aggression that he began with in 1957 has dissipated by the time he writes blindenschrift, and his work appears tamed by an indifferent audience. His subject matter does not, however, change considerably, although it does become more focussed, starting with Germany generally, narrowing to the Germans themselves and then to elements of their lives. The addition of the nuclear question to his list of subjects is not new in itself; Enzensberger is still dealing with a German problem.

He had already mentioned the dangers of atomic filth in "bildzeitung,"[99] so there seems to be a clearly consistent element here.

The increasingly pacified nature of his work and his withdrawal from a broader political attack led some critics to believe that this was the end of Enzensberger's poetic phase, yet were, as Hans Egon Holthusen explains, not entirely correct:

> Viele waren damals davon überzeugt, daß er im Jahre 1964 buchstäblich 'die Produktion eingestellt' habe, um von nun an 'mehr zu tun, als ein Dichter tun kann'....im Grunde aber weder theoretisch noch praktisch bereit war, die 'Produktion' preiszugeben.[100]

Enzensberger did not give up his political activities, but spent the following years preparing for his hoped-for revolution which almost happened in 1968.

In spite of the increasingly pessimistic nature of many of Enzensberger's poems he was still, at this stage, in his utopian phase, which lasted until 1968. Although he no longer wrote poems about a utopia, there still seems to have been the possibility in his mind that poetry, coupled with his essays, could change people's outlook on their society and spur them to act. It was not until the failure of the student-movement

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[99] Enzensberger, "bildzeitung" line 32.

[100] Holthusen 904.

in 1968 that he finally abandoned hope in the populace, and hence any hope in utopian change.

Chapter 4

1968 and Beyond

1968 was clearly the high-point of revolutionary possibilities in Enzensberger's career. Suddenly, what he had been attempting to achieve in his work actually took a concrete form in the student movement, a force of political resistance and enlightenment. It seemed to be the culmination of all he had aimed for, all he had wanted. When the dust settled after this riotous year and it became clear that little of fundamental importance was going to be altered in Germany, Enzensberger, who was profoundly affected by the failure of the student movement, attempted to come to terms with the dashing of his hopes through his essays and poems. What he wrote in 1967 seems to indicate that he had prepared himself for the coming disaster, examining the history of revolution in Germany and the weakness of the students, coming to the conclusion that little could really be expected.[101] However, by 1975, he had suffered a relapse into pessimism, which continued into the Mausoleum collection. His examination of great figures from the past simply reinforces the notion that the social inadequacies of the present have been in existence for so long that anything the poet can do in one lifetime is doomed to failure, along with attempts at revolt.

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[101] Enzensberger, "Berliner Gemeinplätze," Palaver. Politische Überlegungen, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) 14.

This was made clear to Enzensberger in Germany in 1968 and during his Cuban visit of 1969.

In 1967 Enzensberger published the collection of essays that can be seen as his preparation for the events of 1968, entitled Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm. Äußerungen zur Politik. This collection continued the themes of Germany and the Germans common to his previous works. He did, however, broaden the scope of his criticism to other European countries, showing concern in the regressive consolidation of borders and increased competitiveness rather than cooperation, resulting in nationalistic slogans such as "Buy British," "La Grande Nation" and "Deutsche Wertarbeit."[102] He says that the organisation of peoples into nations is a perfect way for those managing the means of production and politics to control the populus.[103] This was not the greatest breeding-ground for revolution.

A further dangerous method of social control, unique to Germany, which had also to be broken, was the neurotic preoccupation with the past. That the Germans exterminated millions of Jews and caused a European war was still being used as a self-repressive political drug, even though the possibilities for such a crime are inherent in every society,

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[102] Enzensberger, "Über die Schwierigkeit, ein Inländer zu sein," Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967) 8.

[103] Enzensberger, "Über die Schwierigkeit" 8.

especially those with new nuclear arsenals. There comes a time, says Enzensberger, that the past, although it must be examined, becomes a handicap for the future, stifling political activity and allowing govermental power to exceed constitutional limits.[104] This total lack of popular involvement in politics produces governments without opposition, something which has happened twice in twentieth-century Germany:

Die linken Parteien im deutschen Parlament:

		(Sitzverteilung Parteien der Linken: übrige Parteien)
Reichstag	1912	110: 287
	1919	187: 236
	1924	162: 310
	1930	220: 357
	1932	221: 363
	1933	0: 647
Bundestag	1949	146: 266
	1953	151: 336
	1957	169: 328
	1966	0: 496 [105]

Germany, in 1967, is non-democratic and with a population content for the most part to enjoy its wealth, whilst allowing

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[104] Enzensberger, "Versuch von der deutschen Frage Urlaub zu nehmen," Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967) 38.

[105] Enzensberger, "Versuch" 39.

the unstable political situation to continue. Essentially, nothing has changed since 1957. If anything, increased wealth has made the country worse. The Germans are more apathetic and politically unaware, thanks to the preoccupation with the past, and as a result, the government is more supremely powerful than it had been since the Nazi era. Apathy and blindness were the hindering factors behind the student-movement of 1968.

This collection of essays is one that marks a continuation of Enzensberger's attacks on Germany, but at a stage when government and the interests of the people were totally disparate. The solution was, or seemed to be, extra-parliamentary opposition which nevertheless amounted to little in practical terms. In 1984, Enzensberger looked back to 1968, the year of uprising and resistance and called it a catastrophe.[106] So it was for him as a writer and a political activist. The confrontation between the government and those not willing to accept parliamentary dictatorship had occurred and the state had won. This had a profound effect on Enzensberger as his new works after 1968 show.

Enzensberger published a selection from his poems in 1971, and added thirty-three new poems to bring the volume up to date. One of these poems, "Ein letzter Beitrag zu der Frage

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[106] Enzensberger, "Erinnerungen an einen Tumult. Zu einem Tagebuch aus dem Jahre 1968," Text und Kritik 49 (1985): 8.

ob Literatur?"[107] illustrates the effect of 1968 on the poet. Certainly, the year was a catastrophe. But, rather than reassessing their roles and subject-matter, Enzensberger's poetic colleagues continue to bury their heads in the past and whisper among themselves rather than reaching out to the people. He begins the 1970s with a call to them to continue their work, abandoning the stale past and preparing for, or at least looking to the future:

> Liebe Kollegen, ich versteh euch nicht.
> Warum zitiert ihr immerfort Hegels Ästhetik und
> Lukacs?
> Warum bringt ihr euch Tag für Tag
> auf den historischen Stand?
> Warum ärgert ihr euch über das
> was im Kursbuch steht?
> Woher diese Angst, Klassiker zu werden
> oder im Gegenteil?
> Und warum fürchtet ihr euch davor
> Clowns zu sein?
> dem Volk zu dienen? (1-11)
>
> Ich sage euch:
> Fürchtet euch nicht!
> Greift in die Tasten.

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[107] Enzensberger, Gedichte 1957-1970 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971) 160-161.

Greift wohin ihr wollt! (27-30)

Enzensberger's pessimism has returned, and he is shouting out of frustration for others to join him, for the poets to write, persuade and enlighten. The future is in the hands of the poets, but they do not respond to his call.

Enzensberger has undergone a realisation of the essential flaws in his poetry of the 1960s. His acceptance that he expected too much from the poems is clear in "Zwei Fehler"[108]:

Ich gebe zu, seinerzeit
habe ich mit Spatzen auf Kanonen geschossen.

Daß es keine Volltreffer gab,
sehe ich ein.

Dagegen habe ich nie behauptet,
nun gelte es ganz zu schweigen.

Schlafen, Luftholen, Dichten:
das ist fast kein Verbrechen.

Ganz zu schweigen
von dem berühmten Gespräch über Bäume.

Kanonen auf Spatzen, das hieße doch
in den umgekehrten Fehler verfallen. (1-12)

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[108] Enzensberger, Gedichte 1955-1970 162.

Not only does Enzensberger now accept that his poems were not powerful enough to effect any changes in society, he also accepts the faults of his type of poetry. The tenth line of this poem is a reference to what he wrote in his essay "Poesie und Politik,"[109] that poetry should concentrate upon those things not spoken of, such as a tree. That the tree is no longer a theme indicates an abandonment of the thinking behind blindenschrift which did indeed concentrate on the smaller items of everyday life, especially in the "camera obscura" part of the collection. He now refuses to exclude anything from his field of vision or from his subject-matter. This broadening of perspective, he is quick to point out in line twelve, does not mean that he is slipping towards the poetically ruinous direct political confrontation, something that he warned against in "Poesie und Politik."[110] As the fourth couplet indicates, Enzensberger has paused, taken a breath, and is ready to write again, albeit with some slight modifications to his style and subject-matter. No longer is he going to confine himself to a narrow perspective; general reflection, mostly of the past, is his aim.

The broadening of subject-matter, the self-critical view of the past and Enzensberger's open admission of the inefficacy of his poetry seem to indicate that the poet has indulged in some ideological spring-cleaning and discarded

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[109] Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 136.

[110] Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 122.

much of what identified him as the polemical poet of the 1960s, such as his utopianism. If this were indeed the case, then a charge of inconsistency could easily be laid before him. Instead, the thread of Enzensberger's poetic purpose is intact along with his aggression; he is still attempting to motivate and enlighten wherever possible. This thread of continuity is best illustrated in the collection of essays he published in 1974, entitled Palaver. Politische Überlegungen 1967-1973. This collection is the linking element between the 1960s and 1970s, containing essays from 1967 to 1973. The information and insight into German revolutionary trends now and in history that he presents, indicate that the failure of 1968 to yield any concrete results in the desired alteration of German society was not wholly unexpected for Enzensberger.

In the 1967 essay "Berliner Gemeinplätze", Enzensberger presents the condition of the revolution in Germany. In short, it has been commercialised; only the advertising world uses the word in slogans such as "Revolution auf dem Waschmittelmarkt, Revolution im Investment-Geschäft."[111] Enzensberger even quotes Adelung from 1807, who said that the Germans do not even possess a word for revolution, and that the concept is foreign to Germany. The closest German word is "Umwälzung", which is unsatisfactory "weil es nicht den Begriff der Sache ausdrückt, sondern eine buchstäbliche

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[111] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze" 8.

Übersetzung des fremden Wortes ist, und einen harten und unserer Sprache fremden Tropus enthält."[112]

Germany is not a home for the revolution in history, and it has carried this distinction over into the post-war period too. Enzensberger says that after 1945 there was an excellent opportunity to form a new state while the old ruling classes were discredited. Instead, the past proved to be more preoccupying than the future and Germans opted to return to the old rulers and have a new beginning in rhetoric only.[113] The Cold War saw Germany return to the international political fold, on the side of the counterrevolution; the politics of the Soviet Union and the SED in the DDR precluding any other alternative. Only once recently was there any real opposition in Germany: against the rearmament programme, which failed due to its stress on emotion and morality, rather than on political opposition.[114]

The Germans' trust in their democracy is, says Enzensberger, misplaced, especially after the Grand Coalition of 1966. The power-cartel that had always ruled Germany now simply required rubber-stamp approval from the parliament to prosecute what it had already decided. This included open repression of opposition which was demonstrated in 1967 in the "police-pogroms," as Enzensberger calls them. The only

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[112] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze" 8.

[113] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze" 10

[114] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze" 11-12.

opposition force with the power to effect any change to come from this period were the students, who, Enzensberger accepts, were few in number, with an uncertain strategy and a vague programme.[115] That Enzensberger could see the weaknesses of the opposition in 1967 seems to indicate that he did not really foresee any dramatic changes in Germany in the final years of the decade. As he showed in his Mausoleum collection of 1975, any revolutionary success in 1968 would have constituted a total aberration in history.

The second essay in Palaver, entitled "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend,"[116] written in 1968, represents Enzensberger's thoughts on the validity of literature. Critics generally took this essay to be the poet's acceptance of the death of literature,[117] and Enzensberger did indeed say that literature as art was no longer acceptable.[118] This seemed to add weight to the argument that Enzensberger had left poetry for the more documentary essay. However, only by selected quoting out of context could any critic conceivably glean such an opinion from this essay. The tone here is at best highly ironic, and Enzensberger even states quite clearly his scepticism concerning the death of literature:

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[115] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze" 14.

[116] Enzensberger, Palaver. Politische Überlegungen (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) 41-54.

[117] e.g. Berghahn 279.

[118] Enzensberger, "Neueste Literatur" 51-52.

> Auch gibt zu denken, daß der 'Tod der Literatur' selber eine literarische Metapher ist, und zwar die jüngste nicht. Seit wenigstens hundert Jahren, sagen wir: seit Lautréamont, befindet sich die Totgesagte, nicht unähnlich der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, in einer permanenten Agonie, und wie diese hat sie es verstanden, die eigene Krisis sich zur Existenzgrundlage zu machen.[119]

It is fairly clear from this passage that Enzensberger's views on literature were the same as they had always been; that flowery bourgeois literature had no place in modern society. The social relevance of poetry and literature in general was still a guiding factor, even though Enzensberger conceded finally that the populus was unreachable. He indicated the lack of contact between poet and populace by saying that literature might as well have died for all the people knew. Most were oblivious to anything that did not reach the shelves of a newspaper kiosk.[120] The death of literature as a concept was simply irrelevant.

The essays in this collection show a gradual alteration in Enzensberger's thinking. The dissatisfaction with German politics so evident in Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm is replaced, after the catastrophe of 1968, with a feeling of hopelessness in the possibilities for change. That revolution

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[119] Enzensberger, "Neueste Literatur" 42.

[120] Enzensberger, "Neueste Literatur" 42.

was not feasible he noted in the essay "Berliner Gemeinplätze". Furthermore, the popular enlightenment necessary for revolution, which was to come from poetry, was simply never going to materialise because the public did not read. This he noted in "Gemeinplätze die Neueste Literatur betreffend." However, in the same essay he acknowledged that literature, although in a state of permanent agony, was not dead, and hence still had a place in society, as long as it excluded nothing from its criticism (as he suggested in the poem "Zwei Fehler"). The role of the author was still unchanged as he made clear in "Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien" of 1970.[121] In this essay Enzensberger says that until the media become a network of suggestion and response, a system of creating a collage of opinion rather than simply the views of the writers of news articles, the author will still have a role. The author is necessary because the media represent manipulation, essentially due to the fact that the public cannot, to any great extent, disagree with what they hear or read. Enzensberger's solution is not to abolish the manipulators but to make everybody one.[122] The idea of total public involvement in the distribution of information is tied to the role of the author in the following way. Enzensberger

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[121] Enzensberger, Palaver. Politische Überlegungen (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) 91-129.

[122] Enzensberger, "Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien," Palaver. Politische Überlegungen, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) 101.

says that until the media become public, the author must act as an agent of the masses, and "gänzlich verschwinden kann er erst dann in ihnen, wenn sie selbst zu Autoren, den Autoren der Geschichte geworden sind."[123] For the time being, the popular use of the Bild-Zeitung as "Leser-Parlament"[124] continues to necessitate the existence of the author, for he stands as a figure of enlightenment in opposition to the manipulative media. In the era after 1968, the public were in a greater need for enlightenment than ever before.

At this point it is of value to determine the consistency of Enzensberger's thought through the period 1967 to 1973. Upon the completion of blindenschrift it was clear that Enzensberger's mood was subject to alteration, generally with a leaning towards increased pessimism, and that his subject-matter had nevertheless remained constant, continuing to target the Germans, the state of their country and society, and the media. That the period under discussion was one of change there can be little doubt, and the question remains as to whether it constituted any alteration in the fundamental aim of Enzensberger as polemicist and poet.

As regards Enzensberger's mood, its penchant for unpredictable alteration continues. The submissive atmosphere of blindenschrift in 1964 had changed by 1967, and it is clearly shown in Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm that

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[123] Enzensberger, "Baukasten" 129.

[124] Enzensberger, "Baukasten" 110.

the poet was regaining his aggression in anticipation of the disturbances shortly thereafter. Enzensberger's new militancy does, however, stand in contrast to "Berliner Gemeinplätze," also written in 1967, which seems to accept, passively enough, that revolution was, as history suggested, not for the Germans. Thereafter, through his poetry of 1971 and Palaver in 1974, Enzensberger adopts a frustrated mood, realizing his mistakes and accepting that literature, although not dead per se, was in desperate need of a new direction. Thus he changed from pessimism in 1964, through renewed aggression in 1967, back to pessimism in 1974. However, bearing in mind the difficulties he experienced in the early years of the 1960s with the reception of his poetry, and the impact of the events in the latter part of the decade, it is not surprising to find a series of mood-swings. The unifying thread that holds his work together is that of adaptability, which enabled Enzensberger to experience setbacks yet continue to write.

Adaptability is also the key to Enzensberger's subject-matter and its consistency. By 1967 it was clear that, in spite of Enzensberger's narrowed poetic perspective in blindenschrift, he was still concentrating on his original themes of Germany and the Germans, as shown in Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm. The apparent conflict of opinions that arises in "Berliner Gemeinplätze" and "Versuch von der deutschen Frage Urlaub zu nehmen", when, in the same year he both supported revolution and accepted its impossibility, can

be explained by adaptability. Come what may, he had to maintain a critical position in order to fulfil his poetic function. Volker Bohn commented on Enzensberger's chameleonic nature in 1986 by saying: "Enzensberger sucht immer das Gewitter, aber bevor der Blitz ihn treffen könnte, ist er auf und davon."[125] Enzensberger is changeable, certainly, but within the parameters of subject that he has set himself. His movement explains how he can have two different views of revolution in 1967 and also how, after the "catastrophe" of 1968, he can continue his criticism in spite of his loss of faith in the Germans. Essentially, thus far in Enzensberger's career there has been little change in his subject-matter. Change was, however, to come in his next volume of poems.

The full title of this new 1975 collection was Mausoleum. Siebenunddreißig Balladen aus der Geschichte des Fortschritts. The subject-matter consists of semi-biographical portraits of past contributors to the "advancement" of society, including not only artists and politicians but a huge variety of figures among whom were mathematicians such as Babbage and astrologers such as Messier. The time-period covered ranges between Giovanni de' Dondi, the Italian clockmaker (1318-1389), and Vyachslav Mikhailovich Molotov, the Soviet politician who was not yet dead in 1975.

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[125] Volker Bohn, "Zu Hans Magnus Enzensbergers Poetik," Neue Rundschau 97 (1986): 99.

When observing the continuity of Enzensberger it is highly surprising to find that, in 1975, he had apparently surrendered all the poetic foundations he had constructed over the previous eighteen years and was suddenly, and, at first glance, inexplicably entertained by historical figures from the past. Critics were equally surprised by the emergence of this highly original piece of literature, so much so that they seem to have been unable to respond to it with meaningful comments: "eines der wichtigsten und schönsten Bücher des Jahres"[126] was all that Michaelis could produce, for example. In fact the singular lack of critical material seems to indicate that the critics were rather intimidated by it. If they had looked a little more closely at Enzensberger's past publications they would have noticed that there is indeed a thread of continuity in this, his fifth volume of poetry. Three poems from this collection show where the continuity of thought lies, and what Enzensberger was trying to achieve with these poems.

The poem "I.K.B. (1806-1859)"[127] recounts the disappointments and triumphs of Isambard Kingdom Brunel,[128] the English engineer. This hugely successful man was a key

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[126] see Dietschreit, Heinze-Dietschreit 109.

[127] Enzensberger, Mausoleum (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975) 73-76.

[128] All titles of the poems in this collection consist of a person's initials only, along with the years of birth and death.

figure in industrial society, building a tunnel under the Thames, along with dry docks, viaducts and ships. The first stanza illustrates the callous nature of this one man and his control over, and need for, many others to construct his visions. The scene is set in the incomplete tunnel under the Thames in London:

> Eintritt: ein Shilling. Im trüben Gaslicht drängten
> sich die Touristen
> und starrten die Arbeiter an: halbnackt, viehisch,
> acht Meter tief
> unter der Themse. Tausend Ziegel pro Mann und Tag,
> bis zu den Knien
> im stinkenden Wasser. In diesem Tunnel ist mancher
> erblindet.
> Doch die längste Schicht fuhr der Demiurg:
> fünfunddreißigeinhalb Stunden. (1-5)

To add to the misery of the workers was the ever-present danger of being killed, an integral part of Brunel's grand projects. For example, the launching of the Great Eastern involved the death of a worker:

> das Schiff setzt sich in Bewegung. Ein irischer
> Taglöhner
> am Ankerspill, namens O'Donovan, wird von der Kurbel
> erfaßt,zerfetzt,
> gen Himmel geschleudert. Sonderbar wie langsam der
> Tote segelt

über die Köpfe der Menge hin! Er scheint zu schweben.
Dreitausend
Neugierige, und niemand bemerkt ihn. Dann beginnt es
zu regnen. (76-80)

From these stanzas it is relatively clear what Enzensberger is saying. The government-commissioned programmes of so-called social improvement are nothing less than monuments to individuals. The notice taken of the average member of society is minimal; he or she is simply a means to the construction of those engineering feats supposedly intended for their benefit but actually offer them only miserable working conditions and death. The worker O'Donovan who is torn to pieces by the crank is unnoticed by the crowd of three thousand, who marvel at the progression of a society capable of building such a ship as the Great Eastern. In fact, this society forces its workers to blind and overwork themselves whilst they are peered at as if in a freak-show by paying tourists. Exploitation is total.

Brunel is, in Ingrid Eggers' opinion,[129] the culmination of a series of social destroyers that started with de' Dondi's watch, the regulator of time, making industrialisation of the workforce possible, continuing through Campanella who wished to improve society through the death-penalty and other violent punishments, Vaucanson who invented the automatic loom and

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[129] Eggers 112.

conveyor belt, and Evans who invented the automatic mill.[130] The consolidation of the average person's exploitation has been going on for so long that Enzensberger seems to be saying that hope for change in industrialized Germany is minimal. The subtitle of this volume of poems was changed to "Fortschritt des Grauens" by Helga Novak of Der Spiegel in 1975,[131] and she is not wholly incorrect. However, Dietschreit claimed that there were poems in the collection that showed a positive contribution to society by certain historical figures. One of these was the poem on de' Dondi, the Italian clockmaker , the same poem that Ingrid Eggers said was the beginning of the end for popular freedom.

This poem was first published in Gedichte 1957-1970,[132] and was slightly rearranged for Mausoleum. It shows both hopeful and pessimistic undertones:

Giovanni de' Dondi aus Padua
verbrachte sein Leben
mit dem Bau einer Uhr.

Einer Uhr ohne Vorbild, unübertroffen
vierhundert Jahre lang.
Das Gangwerk mehrfach,

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[130] Eggers 112.

[131] Dietschreit, Heinze-Dietschreit 113.

[132] Enzensberger, "Himmelsmaschine," Gedichte 1955-1970, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971) 122.

elliptische Zahnräder,
verbunden durch Gelenkgetriebe,
und die erste Spindelhemmung:
eine unerhörte Konstruktion. (1-10)

Die Leute von Padua
sahen nicht auf die Uhr.
Ein Putsch folgte dem andern.
Pestkarren rollten über das Pflaster.
Die Bankiers
stellten ihre Positionen glatt.
Es gab wenig zu essen. (36-42)

In diesem Mittelalter
leben wir immer noch. (58-59)

Enzensberger recognizes the intelligence and craftsmanship that produced the clock, but that the people of Padua took little notice of it is a continuation of Enzensberger's opinion that the populace is not to be relied upon either to effect or to recognize change in society. Hence the public and the innovator are still living with the same relationship as they have been for hundreds of years, that of the Middle Ages. The conclusion that Enzensberger seems to have come to is that greatness will always exist, but so too will the popular indifference to it. Enzensberger therefore retains some slender hope for the future advancement of society, but

simultaneously indicates his conviction that it has not happened in six hundred years and there is no reason why it should now.

Ingrid Eggers' interpretation seems to be the more correct when examined in the context of the poem. Although there is a slight element of optimism in the de' Dondi poem (Enzensberger seems to be moderately reassured by the constant presence of genius), the poet's lack of faith in the populace is still evident. The people failed to take notice of change in the 1340s, and reacted in a similar way in 1967 and 1968. The poem on Brunel also underlines Enzensberger's scepticism regarding the people's ability to react. That one man's skill in creating huge engineering feats should make him so great in the popular eye that the misery he causes for so many is overlooked, is an indictment of a general inability to differentiate between benevolent greatness and Brunel's self-aggrandizement.

The poem "E.G. de la S. (1928-1967)"[133][134] examines benevolence that was indeed supported by the populus. Guevara was a moral figure, not interested in the achievement of fame through the construction of machines or objects, but in the propagation of social harmony. He was less a man of physical contentment and more a man of thought. However, there is still

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[133] Ernesto Guevara de la Serna (Che Guevara).

[134] Enzensberger, Mausoleum 116-117.

an element of criticism in Enzensberger's poem, which is apparent in the second stanza:

> Fern der Schlachthöfe und der Baracken und der
> Bordelle
> bröckelte die Villa des Vaters am Fluß. Das Geld war
> verdunstet,
> doch der Swimming-Pool wurde gehalten. Ein scheues
> Kind,
> allergisch, oft dem Ersticken nah. Kämpfte mit seinem
> Körper,
> rauchte Zigarren, wurde (was immer das sein mag) ein
> Mann. (6-10)

That the house is delapidated and the swimming-pool is intact shows the impracticality of ideology separated from reality: Guevara was unable to feed his people. High-minded moral behaviour had no economic benefits: "Doch die Ökonomie / hörte seinen Reden nicht zu. Es fehlten immer Spaghetti" (17-18), and hence actual social improvement never materialised. He could not make the connection between theory and practicality, and, amidst his preaching to the Russians and his reading of poetry, he was nothing more than a quiet failure:

> Wollte den Russen moralisch kommen. Der
> Menschenfreund
> schrie nach dem Haß, der den Menschen in eine
> gewaltsame,

effektive, kalte Tötungsmaschine verwandeln soll.
Eigentlich
eine Mimose: am liebsten las er Gedichte. (Baudelaire
kannte er auswendig.) Ein zarter Versager, Fraß für
Geheimdienste. (26-30)

Guevara was a man to be admired for his intentions only. His name consequently has since become of interest only to historians: "Nur die Historiker / nisten sich ein wie die Motten ins Tuch seiner Uniform." (49-50). He is now little more than an historical artifact, having quickly become a part of the past although he had only been dead eight years.

In the portrait of Guevara, Enzensberger shows not only how necessary it is to have a basis of practicality to support vision, but also how quickly the past overtakes the individual and makes him a fading memory. Anything that Guevara had to offer is hence eliminated, consigned to the past, and does not even provide a contribution to future generations in their attempts to build a better social environment. Each generation starts again from the beginning, making the same errors.

The three poems from Mausoleum examined here, on the clockmaker, the engineer and the politician, are all set in a past that is irrecoverable. In this context, the achievements of these three figures, as indeed with all those examined in this volume, are lost in history. Nevertheless, there is a continuity of notable achievers throughout history, each generation providing new minds capable of extraordinary

feats, something that is comforting and hence doubly disheartening when it transpires that each generation also contains the wherewithal to ignore innovation, as with de' Dondi, to misconstrue their intentions, as with Brunel, and to forget them all too quickly as with Che Guevara. The most recent illustration of an opportunity missed was 1968, which was, by the majority of Germans, ignored, misunderstood and quickly brushed aside. History was still repeating itself.

In the years between 1967 and 1975, Enzensberger underwent a series of mood-swings, from expectation before 1968, to frustration in 1971, finally coming to rest with a pessimistic look to the past in 1975. He had, in the words of Hans-Egon Holthusen, moved "von der Perspektive des Erwartens zur Perspektive des elegischen Rückblicks, vom Prinzip Hoffnung zum Prinzip Katastrophe, von der 'positiven' zur 'negativen' Utopie."[135] Holthusen continues by saying that somewhere in the period just before 1970 there was a change of mood in Enzensberger's poetic tone. That is clear, but Holthusen uncovers the combination of reasons for this change. In 1968, Enzensberger saw the death of enlightened thought in Germany as far as practical change was concerned, and in 1969, on his visit to Cuba, he saw the truth behind Castro's revolution.[136] This double-shock caused Enzensberger to realise the difference between political fantasy and political

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[135] Holthusen 905.

[136] Holthusen 906.

experience.[137] Even up to 1967 there had been elements of utopianism in Enzensberger's work. The continuing preoccupation with change for the better which he hoped would come from an all too disinterested public, the continued criticisms of the monolithic institutions like the governing power-cartel that had survived the Nazis and would easily survive 1968, all served to show the hopelessness of his task. Enzensberger's mood in 1975 was that of resignation, and he emphasized in the Mausoleum collection that all efforts at social advancement are either malicious or doomed; in either case they end up in the mausoleum of general historical interest, that is, in the unimportant past.

Holthusen is apparently correct when he states that Enzensberger had moved from a positive to a negative utopia. From this point onwards he ceased to attempt to enlighten the lost Germans, or to attack their social inadequacies. In his two remaining poetic volumes, Der Untergang der Titanic and Die Furie des Verschwindens, he presents a vision of a future without change leading inexorably to an apocalyptic end. As Holthusen says, the party is over, and the feeling of anticlimax is strong.[138]

Now appears the best time to accuse Enzensberger of inconsistency. He has suddenly abandoned his previous, more specific targets of German apathy and the political situation

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[137] Holthusen 905.

[138] Holthusen 906.

in Germany, and apparently digressed to figures of the past, also leaving behind him the view to the future which he previously considered necessary in the poem. However, if one looks back at the eighteen years of his work thus far, there is no great general deviation from the pattern. His utopian beginning in 1957 was the high-point of his enthusiasm, stemming from an expectation that poetry could effect alterations in society through enlightenment, and since then there has been a subtle realisation that this was not, unfortunately, going to be the case. His poems up to 1964 noted a greater pessimism and resignation that led him to try the essay as a more influential and popular medium. The prose he produced, in his own publications and in Kursbuch, served only to illustrate the permanence of the quagmire of German society. His position became increasingly weak the more he examined Germany's history, a history that in all fundamental aspects had not changed in centuries. The events of 1968 served only to prove him correct. After the 1969 visit to Cuba his poems show a logical step in the development of a poet who was only, at this point, halfway down the slope of total disillusion.

Chapter 5

The Iceberg and the Sinking Ship

> Die Apokalypse gehört zu unserem ideologischen Handgepäck. Sie ist ein Aphrodisiakum. Sie ist ein Angsttraum. Sie ist eine Ware wie jede andere. Sie ist, meinetwegen, eine Metapher für den Zusammenbruch des Kapitalismus, der bekanntlich seit über hundert Jahren unmittelbar bevorsteht.[139]

Enzensberger wrote this in 1978 and published it in Kursbuch 52. It is indicative of the direction his thought is now taking; that of the apocalypse, the demise of everything. This new direction in thought, begun in earnest with the Mausoleum collection three years earlier, stemmed from the failures of 1968, and since then, ten years hence, Enzensberger has not altered his position. Indeed, he consolidated his views in 1978 by publishing Der Untergang der Titanic, an epic poem consisting of thirty-three songs, or cantos, and sixteen poetic interludes, in which he reflects upon the unprecedented catastrophe of the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, a microcosm of the apocalypse which is ever-present in our hand-baggage.

The poem is set in three places, Berlin, Cuba and the Titanic itself, which nebulously entwine into one. The poem shifts between the present and past, moving between Cuba and

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[139] Enzensberger, "Zwei Randbemerkungen zum Weltuntergang," Politische Brosamen, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983) 225.

Berlin where the scene is set for the apocalypse to happen. The ship, which includes the capitalist world of Berlin, and the revolutionary world of Castro, is continually threatened by the iceberg that looms on the horizon, the iceberg that is destined to tear apart the world which is miniaturised on board a ship. The ship itself, which reminds one of the Brunel poem in Mausoleum, was the peak of engineering skill in the so-called civilized world, and it has on board the same structured society as it left behind on land. The rich occupy the first-class upper decks, and the poorer passengers, the emigrants, have the cabins below the water-line. In short, the greatest product of the western world, indeed, its very way of life, is about to be destroyed. Even amidst such destruction, however, there are survivors who return to land. They do not survive to begin anew, rather they return to the old ways of revenge and blame for the catastrophe, thereby beginning the process of manoeuvring society onto a collision-course with disaster once again. Destruction and failure are not purifiers, they are the seeds of future failure.

Critics received this new work with mixed reactions. Karl Heinz Bohrer reacted by saying that Enzensberger had written something very depressing,[140] something that represents hopelessness and a loss of faith in the human ability to change; instead history repeats itself and progression is meaningless. Helmut Müller reiterated this pessimistic

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[140] Bohrer, "Getarnte Anarchie," 1275.

interpretation in 1982 by quoting Enzensberger, who, whilst reflecting on the hopes of 1967 and 1968, said:

> Damals dachten wir alle: Morgen wird es besser sein, und wenn nicht morgen, dann übermorgen. Naja - vielleicht nicht unbedingt besser, aber doch anders, vollkommen anders, auf jeden Fall. Alles wird anders sein. Ein wunderbares Gefühl. Ich erinnere mich... Es schien, als stünde etwas bevor, etwas von uns zu Erfindendes....[141]

From these lines it is still clear that the disaster of 1968 is still very much in his thoughts. Not even the Mausoleum poems have acted as a purging medicine to help him overcome his pessimism. A further critic, Hans Egon Holthusen, ties the Mausoleum poems to Der Untergang der Titanic and comments that the two works encapsulate the race for progress in modern society,[142] a progress that has within it a self-destructive capacity which is, for Enzensberger, the definitive catastrophe.[143] That Enzensberger loads the ship with a cargo of Berlin's and Cuba's failures makes the disaster immeasurable. Essentially the whole world from west to east is lost, together with any future, for the powers of revolution and resistance across the globe also drown. The conclusion that Holthusen arrives at is: "Die Revolution ist

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[141] Müller 249.

[142] Holthusen 907.

[143] Holthusen 907.

einfach zu schwer für uns. Die Revolution ist ein Problem, das noch nie jemand gemeistert hat, das offenbar nicht gemeistert werden kann."[144]

Although the critics examine different aspects of the work, they are united in the view that Enzensberger has abandoned the utopian tendencies of his earlier material and adopted the dystopian, the preoccupation with apocalypse and death. There is little scope within this work that would allow for any alternative interpretation. The only possible hopeful suggestion of a future existing at all is in the fact that there are survivors, survival being the "Kehrseite der Katastrophe."[145] However, as the last cantos of the work indicate, it is not the ship that has been sinking, but civilisation itself. Man's understanding of progress, tied to the construction of huge ships and symbols of power, is irrelevant. Progress is measured, as the last canto, number thirty-three, suggests, in death. The dinosaurs died out millions of years ago and now it is man's turn; that is progress. We are, so to speak, all in the same boat, and it is sinking. Optimism is excluded.

In this chapter, the main elements of the work will be examined, including the Titanic and how it represents infinitely more than just one ship, the iceberg and what it means in terms of the apocalypse, together with the role of

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[144] Holthusen 909.

[145] Holthusen 908.

the poet and the theme of survival, a paradoxical term, since death is inescapable. These constituent elements clarify Enzensberger's intentions behind writing this work, which took ten years beginning in 1968, and why he is apparently using the centuries-old method of apocalyptic panic-mongering, if that is indeed what he is doing.

The iceberg is, simply, something larger and stronger than a ship, and which reveals only a small part of itself to the naked eye. It is cold, uncompromising, and any confrontation with it results in death. In short, it is death itself. In Der Untergang der Titanic it appears in many forms, as an icy finger of consciousness, as snow or as the colour white; it is therefore capable of penetrating anything at sea, on land and even the human mind.

The first canto[146] opens with the following two stanzas:

> Einer horcht. Er wartet. Er hält
> den Atem an, ganz in der Nähe,
> hier. Er sagt: Der da spricht, das bin ich.
>
> Nie wieder, sagt er,
> wird es so ruhig sein,
> so trocken und warm wie jetzt. (1-6)

The catastrophe begins with a feeling of anticipation, a foreign thought in the mind of the speaker who is not

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[146] Enzensberger, Der Untergang der Titanic. Eine Komödie (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978) 7-9.

convinced his voice is his own. He is alerted by the presence of the iceberg which has crept into his mind, shortly before the ship strikes it:

Ein Knirschen. Ein Scharren. Ein Riß.
Das ist es. Ein eisiger Fingernagel,
der an der Tür kratzt und stockt.

Etwas reißt.
Eine endlose Segeltuchbahn,
ein schneeweißer Leinwandstreifen,

der erst langsam,
dann rascher und immer rascher
und fauchend entzweireißt. (28-36)

The iceberg is a part of the ship, an integral part of its construction. Its icy finger-nail can scratch and destroy as it pleases, and the whiteness, indeed the snow-whiteness of the hull it can tear like a piece of canvas or linen. The possibility for disaster and death is inherent in all things, living or constructed. Even the whiteness of the cloth-like hull belongs to the iceberg. It is simply inescapable.

What is this icy force, the iceberg? Enzensberger lets one of the ship's passengers speculate from the deck in the poem "Der Eisberg"[147]:

"Dieses Schauspiel

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[147] Enzensberger, Titanic 27-29.

hebt die Einbildungskraft,
erfüllt aber auch das Herz
mit einem Gefühle
unwillkürlichen Schauders." (34-38)

The passenger is impressed by the spectacle, but can only attempt an explanation through sensation. The feeling is that of dread. The poet attempts an explanation:

Ja, er ist weiß,
er bewegt sich,
ja, er ist größer
als alles, was sich bewegt
auf dem Meer,
in der Luft
oder auf der Erde. (3-9)

The poet's is a fairly simple explanation at first sight but holds within it a greater understanding of the power of the iceberg. The word "groß" can be taken to mean either big or great. If the iceberg is being described as being bigger than all that moves on land, sea and in the air, then this stanza is a simple statement of fact. If it is to be seen as greater than all living things then the identity of this giant force is better understood. The only force greater than life is death, and that it is greater than all life means that it is all-encompassing. Mankind is included in this equation:

Er ist größer als wir.
Wir sehen immer nur

seine Spitze. (47-49)

The last stanza of "Der Eisberg" is no consolation to the ship of mankind that is destined to collide with this immovable mass:

Er geht uns nichts an,
treibt einsilbig weiter,
braucht nichts,
pflanzt sich nicht fort,
schmilzt.
Er hinterläßt nichts.
Er verschwindet vollkommen.
Ja, so muß es heißen:
Vollkommen. (60-68)

It is none of our business what this great force is, and quite simply beyond our comprehension. It moves onwards, and melts away to nothing, and nothing is what it represents. It has no means of procreation and hence prepares no future for itself. It exists and disappears and is perfect beyond our understanding. It leaves no legacy because there is nothing after death.

The Titanic is, throughout the work, either about to be or being sunk by the iceberg, the indomitable representative of disaster and death. Upon the ship are people from all over the world, all races and ranks, rich, poor, travellers, emigrants and stowaways, men, women and children. The world itself is on board this ship. Life on board is exactly the

same as life in the world as we know it, simplified slightly by the division of passengers into the respective classes of accommodation. Unsurprisingly, the classes are maintained even when the ship is sinking.

As early as the second canto[148] the class difference is explored. The hull has already been breached, the water is flooding in and the band, in their snow-white uniforms, continues to play whilst one first-class passenger tampers with that which could shortly save someone's life:

> John Jacob Astor hingegen schlitzt mit der Nagelfeile
> einen Rettungsring auf und zeigt seiner Frau,
> einer geborenen Connaught, was drin ist
> (vermutlich Kork), während in den Laderaum vorn
> armdick das Wasser strömt, eisig
> unter den Postsäcken gurgelt, in die Kombüsen
> sickert.... (19-25)

Astor, the foolhardy tempter of fate, stands in marked contrast to the passengers of the lower-class accommodation, the poorer journeyers who are already aware of the impending catastrophe. As always, it is the poor who suffer first:

> Nur ganz unten, wo man, wie immer, zuerst kapiert,
> werden Bündel, Babies, weinrote Inletts
> hastig zusammengerafft. Das Zwischendeck
> versteht kein Englisch, kein Deutsch, nur eines
> braucht ihm kein Mensch zu erklären:

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[148] Enzensberger, Titanic 10-11.

daß die Erste Klasse zuerst drankommt,
daß es nie genug Milch und nie genug Schuhe
und nie genug Rettungsboote für alle gibt. (29-36)

That Astor has damaged a lifesaver is, for him, irrelevant. In the case of emergencies the rich are provided for anyway; they are always served first. Everybody else is left to scrabble for the milk, shoes, lifeboats, everything. The classes are intact, even in the face of total destruction.

In the fifth canto,[149] Enzensberger examines how the class structures can continue to survive, returning to his old theme of popular apathy that has dogged him throughout his career. The impending apocalyptic event, which Enzensberger said in "Zwei Randbemerkungen zum Weltuntergang" was a metaphor for the collapse of capitalism,[150] offers an opportunity for those who must suffer the shortages of milk and shoes to redress the balance through revolt. In the midst of upheaval, a revolutionary stands on deck and calls to the poor Lithuanian emigrants to take back what is theirs, what was stolen from them:

Raubt, was man euch geraubt hat,
nehmt endlich, was euch gehört, rief er,
frierend, die Jacke war ihm zu klein,
sein Haar züngelte unter den Kränen,
er rief: Ich bin einer von euch,

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[149] Enzensberger, Titanic 24-25.

[150] Enzensberger, "Zwei Randbemerkungen" 225.

worauf wartet ihr noch? Jetzt
ist es Zeit, reißt die Barrieren ein,
schmeißt das Geschmeiß ins Wasser
mitsamt seinen Koffern, Hunden, Lakaien,
die Frauen auch und sogar die Kinder,
mit Gewalt, mit Messern, mit bloßen Händen! (1-11)

This incident is reminiscent of the events of 1968. The voice of opportunity rings out to the masses, encouraging them to seize the chance to effect change when the rulers are weak. However, they have been stripped of will and are afraid of the consequences:

Sie verstanden wohl, was er sagte,
aber sie verstanden ihn nicht.
Seine Worte waren nicht ihre Worte.
Sie waren von andern Ängsten zerfressen
als er, und von andern Hoffnungen.
Sie standen geduldig da
mit ihren Felleisen, ihren Rosenkränzen,
ihren rachitischen Kindern
an den Barrieren, sie machten Platz,
sie hörten ihm zu, respektvoll,
und warteten, bis sie versunken waren. (37-47)

Instead of fighting from the barriers they stand aside to allow the first-class passengers through, watching until they sink. As it says in the twenty-second canto,[151] "wir sitzen

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[151] Enzensberger, Titanic 71.

alle in einem Boot, / doch: Wer arm ist, geht schneller unter" (27-28).

The speed of death is, however, all that is at issue here. The rich too will die; they are simply able to postpone their demise a little longer than the poor. Those who survive the shipwreck are not destined to survive forever, and the thoughts and opinions that the classes live by are equally susceptible to death. For example, in the tenth canto[152] the poet observes an argument through a porthole between a Russian emigrant and a Manchester mill-owner, a revolutionary and a capitalist. The poet cannot hear what they are saying but it is fairly obvious anyway; the Russian is preaching revolution and the Englishman strict discipline and authority. But to what end? They are both killed:

> Am liebsten möchten alle gerettet werden,
> auch du. Aber ist das nicht allzuviel
> verlangt von einer Idee? Die Partie
> bleibt unentschieden. Kein Mensch
> hat die beiden Herren erblickt
> in einem der Rettungsboote, kein Mensch
> hat je wieder von ihnen gehört. (36-42)

Politics, social planning, apathy, revolution and authority are all irrelevant, for the ship of humanity is sinking. It does not matter who survives this one shipping accident, for the human disaster is destined to be far greater.

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[152] Enzensberger, Titanic 42-43.

There are, nevertheless, some survivors. Der Untergang der Titanic concludes with the aftermath of the disaster when all survivors gather together in a room in Berlin in the winter after the accident. As Hans Egon Holthusen comments, the final cantos in which the survivors appear have an atmosphere that is Hades-like, and one is not sure whether the people portrayed are dead or alive.[153] Indeed, the thirtieth canto[154] begins:

> Wir leben noch, sagte einer von uns,
> der im Halbdunkel saß:
> Wir wissen es besser. (1-3)

There are people who have survived the shipwreck but they are indeed like the undead, in a limbo between unending disasters, one of which is bound to kill them. In the thirty-first canto,[155] the traces of previous disasters are still visible:

> Der Heizer hielt die Karbidlampe hoch
> und zeigte uns an der Wand die Marken
> früherer Überschwemmungen,
> dunkle Striche, kniehoch,
> hüfthoch, stirnhoch,
> im zischenden Licht. (10-15)

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[153] Holthusen 909.

[154] Enzensberger, Titanic 102-106.

[155] Enzensberger, Titanic 107-112.

There is nothing to indicate that the pattern of humanity, which is rather mistakenly called progression, will change. Disasters and floods will keep returning as long as man is incapable of organising himself socially. The past, which is visible on the walls of the Berlin room, is a warning for the future. The floods have become worse over the years, starting at knee-depth and rising past the thigh to the head. The next one will be the last, and it is already snowing outside.

That another flood, or human disaster, is inevitable, is indicated in the thirtieth canto. The coming catastrophe is rooted in the simple notion that the human race is incapable of progression; the only possible outcome of the future is repetition. The survivors' attempts at reconstruction are exactly that: reconstruction. They are trying to return to their way of life before the flood, like rewinding a tape only to play it again:

> Erst muß alles desinfiziert sein,
> geschient, geflickt und begraben.
> Dann kommt die Rache dran,
> nach der Rache die Wiederholung. (41-44)

The repetition of catastrophe noticeable here reiterates the same theme from Mausoleum. Whatever grand projects man undertakes have within them the possibility for disaster. The history of progression referred to in the subtitle of the 1975 volume of poems is nothing of the kind. It is simply a series of repeated catastrophes.

The final canto, the thirty-third,[156] is the final comment on the aftermath of the shipwreck, and where the poet realizes the significance of the disaster. He contemplates whether it is indeed simply one ship that is sinking:

> Ich frage mich, sind es wirklich nur ein paar Dutzend
> Personen,
> oder hanget da drüben das ganze Menschengeschlecht,
> wie auf einem x-beliebigen Musikdampfer, der
> schrottreif
> und nur noch einer Sache geweiht ist, dem Untergange?
> Ich weiß es nicht.... (8-12)

He is, it would seem, unsure whether the entire human race is sinking, but there are other indications in the work, and in this canto, that this is indeed the case. The tide-marks on the wall of the room in Berlin is one example.[157] Another example in canto 33 is evident in the last stanza:

> Aber die Dinosaurier, wo sind sie geblieben? Und
> woher rühren
> diese Tausende und Abertausende von klatschnassen
> Koffern,
> die da leer und herrenlos auf dem Wasser treiben? Ich
> schwimme und heule.
> Alles, heule ich, wie gehabt, alles schlingert, alles

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[156] Enzensberger, Titanic 114-115.

[157] Enzensberger, Titanic 107.

unter Kontrolle, alles läuft, die Personen vermutlich
ertrunken
im schrägen Regen, schade, macht nichts, zum Heulen,
auch gut,
undeutlich, schwer zu sagen, warum, heule und
schwimme ich weiter. (37-43)

The poet continues to swim amongst the debris, crying for the survivors, but there is nobody left, only soaking cases, the remnants of people. There is nobody left to listen to him; man has passed on like the dinosaurs in the unstoppable tide of natural progress.

This final canto reminds one of the ongoing theme in Enzensberger's work of the relevance of the poet in society. Here, in a world of failure and apocalypse, there is still no room for him and what there is, is ignored. There is still nobody to listen. In the poem "Weitere Gründe dafür, daß die Dichter lügen,"[158] the poet explains why poets are ignored and why many are seen as being liars:

Weil der Augenblick,
in dem das Wort 'glücklich'
ausgesprochen wird,
niemals der glückliche Augenblick ist.
Weil der Verdurstende seinen Durst
nicht über die Lippen bringt.
Weil im Munde der Arbeiterklasse

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[158] Enzensberger, Titanic 61.

das Wort 'Arbeiterklasse' nicht vorkommt.
Weil, wer verzweifelt,
nicht Lust hat, zu sagen:
"Ich bin ein Verzweifelnder."
Weil Orgasmus und 'Orgasmus'
nicht miteinander vereinbar sind.
Weil der Sterbende, statt zu behaupten:
"Ich sterbe jetzt",
nur ein mattes Geräusch vernehmen läßt,
das wir nicht verstehen.
Weil es die Lebenden sind,
die den Toten in den Ohren liegen
mit ihren Schreckensnachrichten.
Weil die Wörter zu spät kommen,
oder zu früh.
Weil es also ein anderer ist,
immer ein anderer,
der da redet,
und weil der,
von dem da die Rede ist,
schweigt. (1-28)

The poet is a bearer of lies because that which is unpleasant, which people ignore, is the poet's business. However, because the proletariat doesn't use the word proletariat does not mean they are not working-class; that the desperate man does not declare his plight does not eradicate the fact that he is

desperate. What Enzensberger is driving at here is that a poet is feared and ignored because he enlightens and reveals the truth. Furthermore, there is a hint of the didactic here; Enzensberger seems to be pointing out to his fellow poets that they should continue to talk about the man who cannot speak for himself, the man who is thirsty and would rather suffer than admit it; the theme of German apathetic tolerance has returned.

There is, it would seem, a slight reversal of Enzensberger's pessimism with this apparent effort to reincarnate the role of the poet as a figure of enlightenment. It should, however, be borne in mind not only the overall mood of pessimism in Der Untergang der Titanic but also what Enzensberger wrote in 1976, two years earlier. In an essay entitled "Bescheidener Vorschlag zum Schutze der Jugend vor den Erzeugnissen der Poesie,"[159] he commented:

> Über die Wirkungen der Poesie lassen sich... überhaupt keine sinnvollen Aussagen machen. Das ist auch gar nicht nötig, denn diese Wirkungen sind im gesellschaftlichen Maßstab mikroskopisch.[160]

With these comments in mind, the poem's meaning becomes somewhat clearer. The poet is ineffectual because, even when

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[159] Enzensberger, Mittelmaß und Wahn. Gesammelte Zerstreuungen 3rd ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989) 23-41.

[160] Enzensberger, "Bescheidener Vorschlag zum Schutze der Jugend vor den Erzeugnissen der Poesie," Mittelmaß und Wahn. Gesammelte Zerstreuungen, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989) 26.

seeking to serve the masses, he is considered to be a liar. The masses prefer to suffer without representation, to allow the first-class passengers to board the lifeboats first, as in the fifth canto, and to let themselves drown. In short, at this point in Enzensberger's career, any return to optimism cannot be expected.

The time for the poet to act as an enlightening force has passed. What Enzensberger is now primarily concerned with is the aftermath of the disaster of 1968, and the presentation of life after hope. That he is continuing his dystopian messages from the Mausoleum collection is fairly clear, but how consistent is his work in the light of the rest of his career? The work that Enzensberger produced in the 1970s was a culmination of the three most negative social elements he had encountered, namely the apathy of the populus, the stationing of nuclear weapons in Germany and the failure of the student-movement in 1968. Thomas Koebner, after examining the development of Enzensberger's pessimism going back as far as the "doomsday" poem[161] which dealt with the nuclear threat, asks, "was hat sich am Ton Enzensbergers im Vergleich zu früher eigentlich geändert?"[162] Fundamentally, very little has changed. There were apocalyptic tendencies noticeable in his

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[161] Enzensberger, blindenschrift 44-45.

[162] Thomas Koebner, "Am Kap der guten Hoffnungslosigkeit," Kontroversen, alte und neue. Akten des VII. Internationalen Germanisten Kongresses Göttingen 1985, 10, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986) 230.

work as soon as atomic weapons became an issue in Germany. As his poetic career draws to an end, it becomes ever-clearer that, although he had ceased trying to appeal to a broad readership, his basic poetic function, that of an illustrator, was still strong. In this light, he is still very much the poet he was in 1964. Politically, he was still maintaining his criticism of the capitalist society that categorises people according to wealth, a criticism that was becoming ever darker with the adoption of the apocalyptic theme.

Chapter 6

Dystopia

In 1980, Hans Magnus Enzensberger published his last collection of poems, entitled Die Furie des Verschwindens.[163] Enzensberger was now fifty-one years of age and had been a poet for twenty-three of those years, years that had seen him transformed from a hopeful young writer with aspirations of changing society for the better, to a man convinced of the inefficacy of the poem as a means to any political end, and doubting the possibilities for revolutionary opportunities in the future. His last volume of poems was a fitting end to his career, concentrating mostly on a review of the previous decades and their hopes and disappointments. The mood of the poems is, as is to be expected, pessimistic. He guides his reader through a series of reminiscences of the 1970s, of the loss of revolutionary optimism, the loss of individuality in a capitalist society, concluding the collection with the poem "Die Furie,"[164] which contains an inevitable downward motion that stands in contrast to the rising hopefulness of "utopia,"[165] one of his optimistic early poems.

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[163] Enzensberger, Die Furie des Verschwindens. Gedichte (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980).

[164] Enzensberger, Die Furie 86.

[165] See Schultz 198.

In the foreword to Die Furie des Verschwindens, it is noted that one does not need to know what a Fury is to understand the poetry of the volume.[166] Nevertheless, since Enzensberger has made the figure an integral part of the title it is of value to briefly examine the Furies and what they signify. Essentially, they are figures in Greek mythology, three sisters who are the daughters of the earth. One was called Alecto, the one who never rests, one Tisiphone, the avenger, and Magaera, the one who never forgets, although they were seldom referred to by name because they were so terrible.[167] What is most pertinent to Enzensberger's works is that all sacrifices made to the Furies disappeared into an abyss. The abyss is especially relevant to Enzensberger's "Fury of Disappearance" for, as will be noted, the theme of achievement being linked to failure is continued. All that is achieved ends in an abyss of ineffectuality.

The title of the work seems to attract critics to the final poem, "Die Furie", which, although highly significant, is not the only part of the work. Karla Lydia Schulz, for example, concentrates on a comparison of the "utopia" poem and "Die Furie," but does draw some enlightening results. She claims the following in her conclusion:

> If "Die Furie" is a dystopia criticizing progress, the counterpart to "Utopia" celebrating anarchy, it

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[166] Enzensberger, Die Furie 2.

[167] Schulz 199.

> is also a realization of progressive anarchy, of language leading the writer he does not know where. It is "produktive Unruhe," the utopia that is not situated by despair or hope but by the fact that it is "no place" and on the move.[168]

This observation is crucial to the understanding of where Enzensberger now stands politically. Firstly, it must be borne in mind that anarchy is not a state of disorder, but simply order without governmental or political constraints. Secondly, if Enzensberger is adopting an image of the abyss to illustrate the efforts of mankind, it is not to show the victory of anarchy, which is commonly mistaken to mean disorder, rather its failure to break the recurring pattern of disaster in man's history. However, the anarchic principle is still healthy, as it leads Enzensberger ever-forward to a greater understanding of the limits of an ordered utopia or, less abstractly speaking, of a society controlled by political constraints, where everything does return to the Fury and her abyss. As Karla Lydia Schulz says, the (negative) "utopia is not situated by despair or hope," but by the fact that it is in a state of flux. This stands in contrast to mankind's past, as explored in Mausoleum and Der Untergang der Titanic, which is, rather than being in a state of constant change, simply a recurring cycle of beginnings and endings. If Schulz is correct in her observations, which are indeed very

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[168] Schulz 202.

convincing, then Enzensberger has found a possibility for human progression in a dystopia, a place where achievement is irrelevant and constant change is everything. This striking claim will be examined in relation to Enzensberger's poems later in the chapter.

Reinhold Grimm also manages to draw some pertinent conclusions on Enzensberger from his 1980 work. He too looks back to the poet's beginnings in 1957, to the poem "verteidigung der wölfe," and examines it in relation to the Fury. He claims, quite reasonably, that the Fury has been a part of Enzensberger's work from the beginning.[169] He recalls the brides in the 1957 poem who celebrate their "sieg der weichseln" and asks, "Sind sie nicht ebenfalls, surreal und anarchisch, schon Furien? Furien freilich des Glücks, der unmittelbaren Befreiung; Furien einer furiosen Utopie."[170] This claim is certainly feasible, and brings to light a thread of continuity throughout Enzensberger's work. Indeed, in another essay Grimm repeats his opinion that there is an element of consistency. He says, after examining art, the utopia, anarchy and politics, all ongoing themes in Enzensberger's poems, that, "essentially, neither the man nor his production have changed over the years, but both betray a chameleonic changeability within their poetic anarchism that

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[169] Reinhold Grimm, "Das Messer," 164.

[170] Grimm, "Das Messer" 164.

even the motleyest triad of notions is far too fixed and orderly to contain."[171]

The last critic to be dealt with here is Herbert Uerlings. His main comment is that Enzensberger returns to the elements of everyday life that were previously noted in blindenschrift of 1964. The ensuing effect is to make the apocalyptic images in the poems that much more real, images that are not lost in an aesthetic poetic form, but which the reader can identify with.[172] Uerlings quotes Enzensberger's own words to illustrate the reasoning behind the accessibility of the apocalyptic images. Enzensberger said that apocalyptic visions are virulent:

> weil sie unsern Erfahrungen, Wünschen und Ängsten entsprechen, auf der Autobahn zwischen Frankfurt und Bonn, vor dem Bildschirm, der zeigt, daß wir im Krieg sind, unter Hubschraubern, in den Korridoren der Kliniken, der Arbeitsämter und der Gefängnisse: wiel sie, mit einem Wort, in diesem Sinne realistisch sind.[173]

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[171] Grimm, "Poetic Anarchism? The Case of Hans Magnus Enzensberger," Texturen. Essays und anderes zu Hans Magnus Enzensberger, (New York: Lang, 1984) 127.

[172] Herbert Uerlings, "Ideologikritik als auratische Erfahrung? Zur Lyrik Hans Magnus Enzensbergers," Akten des VII. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses. Göttingen 1985. Kontroversen, alte und neue, 10. ed. Albrecht Schöne (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986) 242.

[173] Enzensberger, "Zwei Randbemerkungen" 236.

Enzensberger recognizes the apocalyptic possibilities in everyday life and hence makes them central in his poems. They are, as a result, that much more immediate and identifiable.

The first poem in Die Furie des Verschwindens is entitled "Andenken,"[174] and constitutes a concluding epitaph on the 1970s:

> Also was die siebziger Jahre betrifft,
> kann ich mich kurz fassen.
> Die Auskunft war immer besetzt.
> Die wundersame Brotvermehrung
> beschränkte sich auf Düsseldorf und Umgebung.
> Die furchtbare Nachricht lief über den Ticker,
> wurde zur Kenntnis genommen und archiviert.
>
> Widerstandslos, im großen und ganzen,
> haben sie sich selber verschluckt,
> die siebziger Jahre,
> ohne Gewähr für Nachgeborene,
> Türken und Arbeitslose.
> Daß irgendwer ihrer mit Nachsicht gedächte,
> wäre zu viel verlangt.

Essentially, the decade amounted to little. Increased prosperity was confined to Düsseldorf and its surrounding area (which could indeed be the rest of the Federal Republic), and the years simply passed by without resistance to the state,

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[174] Enzensberger, Die Furie 9.

which consequently took little notice of Germany's social problems, such as the Turks and the unemployed. Hence they are to be years to be criticised without mercy; it is too much to ask that anyone should think kindly of this decade. Most harmful to Enzensberger personally was the fact that the "information booth" was always occupied, a comment on the control of information by the press and other media, which continued to misinform the populus in spite of the poet. This showed itself in practical terms with the reception of his collection of essays, Politische Brosamen. Enzensberger commented that it was a shame that nobody picked up on his observations and argued them through.[175] This collection was published in 1982, but the lack of response to it is indicative of the total popular indifference to the socio-political situation that stagnated further through the 1970s. The political critic was becoming redundant.

The poem, "Andenken," reflects the ongoing decline of Enzensberger's hope for change in Germany. The post-1968 era of extinct revolutionary feeling has allowed Germany's problems to become an accepted norm and therefore without possible correction. This stagnation reiterates Enzensberger's feeling that the so-called progression of humanity is indeed simply a series of recurring failures, an idea encapsulated by the Mausoleum collection. 1968 constituted a period of possible progression in the same way that the 1970s

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[175] See Bohn 97.

represented a period of almost symmetrical regression, with the final result being an unchanged status quo. The stagnation of society has eradicated any hope for the kind of revolutionary change for which Enzensberger had once hoped: revolution is now a tired, hackneyed phrase, as the poet makes clear in the next poem, entitled "Die müde Sache."[176]

This poem deals with the end of the revolution, and consists of a speaker arguing with a revolutionary who is unable to accept the hopelessness of the old, tired phrases and ambitions of the cause in the past. The first eighteen lines put the revolution into context in modern times:

> Der alte Kühlschrank hustet und bebt eine Weile.
> Aus dem Nebenzimmer ruft jemand: Nicht um uns
> geht es hier, es geht um die Sache!- Allerhand
> (sage ich), solche Töne, lange nicht mehr gehört.
> Das muß der Schulfunk sein. Du natürlich, angeödet
> wie immer, schweigst!- Finsteres Schweigen.-
> Siehst du denn nicht, wie heroisch und lieb wir sind
> in unseren riesigen Badewannen (fahre ich fort),
> und begeistert dich nicht dieses Weitermachen,
> mit dem Glas in der Hand, im Bett, politisch
> und so weiter, dieses glucksende Weitermachen
> im Software-Bereich, bei guten, was sag ich,
> vorbildlichen Sozialleistungen?- Eine müde Sache
> (sagst du), alles Tautologien, Klappentexte.-

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[176] Enzensberger, Die Furie 18-19.

Zugegeben. Geschenkt. Aber du hast leicht reden
(erwidere ich), du kennst die Versuchung nicht,
aufzuhören, ganz einfach aufzuhören. Oder?-
Finsteres Schweigen.- Tatsächlich, niemand schreit.

(1-18)

The first voice audible is that of the modern German, satisfied with the continuation ("Weitermachen") of society, through software products and "exemplary" social achievements. The second voice, heard much less, is that of the revolutionary, still able to see tautology in the German and his world. The satisfied person attempts to defend his position by referring to his own "bathtub" heroism, the producer of the apathetic "Glas in der Hand" awareness. In the first part of the poem the revolutionary accuses the main speaker of repeating tired old phrases, suggesting that it is Germany that is actually "die müde Sache." This prompts him to accuse the revolutionary of being unable to accept that the revolution is finished. Enzensberger's main comment here seems to be that they are both correct. The relentless repetition of Germany's social errors, and the dormant, if not dead state of the revolution, can offer no hope for future social improvement. The image of Germany presented here is that of ineffectual conservatism and revolutionary feeling, attempting to ward off the coming ice-age of disaster with matchsticks:

Die Eiszeit

mit Zündhölzern zu bekämpfen... das ist

eine müde Sache.... (28-30)

Keeping this poem in mind and turning to the earlier observations to stem from Schultz's essay, there is a pattern that starts to form. Enzensberger has, in "Die müde Sache," accepted that neither right nor left-wing politics can lead to any social improvement in Germany. The right is too self-satisfied and the left has no support. Politics as a whole is totally ineffectual, which leaves only the "progressive anarchy" which Schultz suggested.[177] As Enzensberger's poetic career draws to an end, it is becoming ever-clearer where his central political interests lie. His lack of faith in the capabilities of traditional forms of party-politics leave no other option than for him to consolidate the anarchic flavour that has been evident in his poetry since the beginning. The inconsequential nature of party-politics also caused Enzensberger to cease trying to incite his readership to resist, for the state simply moved relentlessly on, ignoring its opponents.

In the poem "Die Frösche von Bikini,"[178] Enzensberger comments on the efficacy of the utopia as a means of enlightenment by saying:

Utopien? Gewiß, aber wo?
Wir sehen sie nicht. Wir fühlen sie nur
wie das Messer im Rücken. (255-257)

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[177] Schulz 202.

[178] Enzensberger, Die Furie 37-52.

The utopia is, as a means of en ghtenment, ineffectual, due to its intangible nature. It exists only as an unpleasant feeling of lost opportunity. The dystopia, in contrast, is more effective because it is a clearly visible part of everyday life, in the apocalyptic possibilities on the motorway, for example. However, it is not intended as an enlightening symbol, as with the utopia, rather it indicates the fact that the opportunities of the past have been lost. Now, by the time one recognizes his or her own descent into the dystopian abyss, it is too late to rebel and reverse the apocalypse. To blame are those who missed the opportunities of the past, but, as Enzensberger illustrates in the poem "Automat,"[179] the character of the German has changed so little that if the revolutionary possibilities of 1968 should return they would once more be ignored.

In the poem "Automat," Enzensberger presents the image of the German as it stands in 1980. There is an intentional lack of clarity in the poem as to whether the "Automat" is a machine or the new lack-lustre human:

Er zieht Zigaretten
für ein paar Mark Zigaretten

Er zieht den Krebs
er zieht die Apartheid
er zieht ein paar entfernte Massaker

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[179] Enzensberger, Die Furie 58-59.

Er zieht und zieht
doch indem er zieht
verschwindet alles was er zieht

Auch die Zigaretten verschwinden

Er blickt den Automaten an
Er sieht sich selber
Für einen Augenblick
sieht er aus wie ein Mensch

Dann verschwindet er wieder
Mit einem Klacks
fallen die Zigaretten

Er ist verschwunden
Es war nur ein Augenblick
Es war eine Art von Glück

Er ist verschwunden
Unter dem was er gezogen hat
liegt er begraben (1-22)

Enzensberger's view of the German is unchanged since he wrote "die scheintoten,"[180] but now the image is that of a race of

[180] Enzensberger, landessprache 17.

consuming machines. Certainly the German is capable of absorbing the troubles of the world, but in a purely mechanical way. There is no reaction to the distant massacres, only a brief moment of recognition before humanity disappears once more. The world is a series of images tied to advertising, each one as meaningless and dehumanising as the next. The German lives by reacting to such insignificant stimuli; his life is a series of functions like that of a machine, and he is unable to think for himself. Such is the figure of hope for Germany in the mind of Enzensberger.

Enzensberger's disappointment with the outcome of post-war Germany and the opportunity of building a comfortable social environment, together with the missed chance of 1968 to rectify that which had failed, is clear in the poem "Sprechstunde."[181] In a very personal poem Enzensberger presents a conversation between himself and what is probably a psychiatrist, illustrating the hopes and setbacks he experienced. The feminine figure referred to in the poem is, as Dietschreit suggests, the revolution,[182] and Enzensberger's relationship with it is presented as a broken love-affair:

> Wissen Sie, Herr Doktor,
> früher war ich verrückt nach ihr.
> Was hab ich alles getan,
> ihr zuliebe. Hier

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[181] Enzensberger, Die Furie 68-69.

[182] Dietschreit, Heinze-Dietschreit 128.

ist mein Krankenschein. Mit der Zeit
hab ich dann eingesehn,
daß ich der Dumme war.
Nie wollte sie sich festlegen.
Monatelang la vie en rose, und dann,
auf einmal, Heulen und Zähneknirschen.
Alles Theater, sagte ich mir.
Sie will mir nur Angst einjagen
mit ihren Grimassen. Übrigens,
die Tabletten habe ich weggeschmissen.
Ganz zu schweigen von ihren Launen.
Immer war sie unpünktlich!
Aber bei all ihren Fehlern, Herr Doktor,
ich hatte viel für sie übrig.
Mein Appetit ist wieder normal.
Natürlich, unentbehrlich ist niemand.
Es wird auch ohne sie gehen.
Doch seitdem sie fort ist, verschwunden,
einfach abhandengekommen,
ehrlich gesagt, Herr Doktor,
seitdem fehlt mir was.
Sie werden lachen:
Ich denke gern an die Zukunft zurück.

The overall tone of the poem is that of regret in the failure of the relationship between the poet and the revolution. As he says, it was all theatre, an unreliable and unpunctual

lover that came to nothing. Now that the relationship has ended, life goes on but there is something missing, namely the pleasure of resistance. The mutual augmentation that the partners brought one another has collapsed, and, as neither can survive without the other, the role of the poet is jeopardised. He has failed to keep the relationship together, and all that remains is to look back to what the future might have held.

"Sprechstunde" is a proclamation on Enzensberger's part that he recognises that none of his early hopes have come to fruition. He is, to all intents and purposes, proclaiming the end of that incentive which urged him to write throughout his career, that of the revolution. With this unhappy conclusion the poet, as Enzensberger sees him or her to be, is finished. German political apathy has succeeded in rendering the political poet irrelevant, and social relevance was a prerequisite for such a writer. The last two poems of Die Furie des Verschwindens mark the final comment of this poet on himself and on a country that failed to respond to his prescribed enlightenment.

The first of these final poems is entitled "Der fliegende Robert"[183] and constitutes Enzensberger's defence against accusations of escapism in his poetry. He does not deny the accusations but looks to the reasons why it is necessary, blaming "you", the unreceptive reader:

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[183] Enzensberger, Die Furie 85.

Eskapismus, ruft ihr mir zu,
vorwurfsvoll.
Was denn sonst, antworte ich,
bei diesem Sauwetter!-,
spanne den Regenschirm auf
und erhebe mich in die Lüfte.
Von euch aus gesehen,
werde ich immer kleiner und kleiner,
bis ich verschwunden bin.
Ich hinterlasse nichts weiter
als eine Legende,
mit der ihr Neidhammel,
wenn es draußen stürmt,
euern Kindern in den Ohren liegt,
damit sie euch nicht davonfliegen.

The climate for the political poet is wrong, not through any fault of the poet, but from the point of view of the readership, which sees Enzensberger dwindling away to nothing, a victim of the "Fury of Disappearance." He does leave behind a legend, or so he says, to appeal to the children of those who, at present, lack interest in improving their society. What is clear, however, is that there is to be no compromise, on Enzensberger's part, to accommodate the indifferent. Rather, the legacy that he leaves will continue into the future for later generations. One observation clouds his hope, and that is the view that Enzensberger already accepted the

fruitless repetition of failure that dogged humanity. Future generations may indeed continue the attempts to improve society, but, if history indicates anything it shows they will fail.

Failure is epitomised by the abyss which belongs to Enzensberger's Fury. She exists, passively and invisibly, awaiting all human endeavour to fall to her. "Die Furie,"[184] the final poem of the work, examines her effect and her omnipotence:

> Sie sieht zu, wie es mehr wird,
> verschwenderisch mehr,
> einfach alles, wir auch;
> wie es wächst, über den Kopf,
> die Arbeit auch; wie der Mehrwert
> mehr wird, der Hunger auch;
> sieht einfach zu, mit ihrem Gesicht,
> das nichts sieht; nichtssagend,
> kein Sterbenswort;
> denkt sich ihr Teil;
> Hoffnung, denkt sie,
> unendlich viel Hoffnung,
> nur nicht für euch;
> ihr, die nicht auf uns hört,
> gehört alles; und sie erscheint
> nicht fürchterlich; sie erscheint nicht;

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[184] Enzensberger Die Furie 86.

ausdruckslos; sie ist gekommen;
ist immer schon da; vor uns
denkt sie; bleibt;
ohne die Hand auszustrecken
nach dem oder jenem,
fällt ihr, was zunächst unmerklich,
dann schnell, rasend schnell fällt, zu;
sie allein bleibt, ruhig,
die Furie des Verschwindens.

The Fury is invisible and intangible, and yet she is present. She observes humanity as it grows in its excesses, in population, hunger and inequality. She sees, although she sees nothing, indicating that the demise of humanity is so inexorable that she does not need to watch. She simply awaits the end. Effortlessly she receives that which is hers, as humanity, slowly at first and then, like a titanic flood, falls to her and her abyss. There is, as she notes, no hope for mankind in spite of mankind's own hopes for the future. Humanity's extremes, as noted in line four, rise as a flood over one's head, drowning everything in the final disaster that was awaited in the thirty-first canto of Der Untergang der Titanic.[185] Enzensberger's poetic career has ended, not with a utopia, but with an all-embracing apocalyptic vision of the future.

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[185] Enzensberger, Titanic 107.

Taking the two final poems of Die Furie des Verschwindens and examining what they mean in relation to Karla Lydia Schulz's observations earlier in the chapter, reveals Enzensberger's political stance at the conclusion of his poetic career. He says in "Der fliegende Robert," that he leaves a legend behind to influence the future, and yet the existence of any future whatsoever is called into question in "Die Furie." How then, can Schulz call the Fury "progressive anarchy"? These apparently disparate ideas can be united as follows. The inevitability of the final human disaster is an unquestioned theme in Enzensberger's work, and yet the poet still seems to have a role. The poet is the sole provider of a solution to the impending apocalypse. The solution is an abandonment of that which, in society, produces the recurring series of disasters. Government, with its legions of bureaucrats and the media with its monopoly of truth, are those highly unproductive social elements that must be eliminated. The legend that Enzensberger hopes to leave behind is a reverberating reminder of this atavistic chain that must be broken, and which should be replaced by "progressive anarchy". Only then will the Fury be forced to try a little harder for her bounty.

If Enzensberger had such a vision, then why did he cease writing poetry in 1980? Throughout his career he had attempted to use the poetic medium to effect change, but to little avail. As he notes in "Der fliegende Robert," the climate is

wrong for a political poet as the readership is incapable of absorbing the material. Furthermore, the revolutionary stimuli are too weak to effect any real changes in society, something clear in "Die müde Sache." The poetic medium itself was, however, the greatest problem for Enzensberger. Its universal reputation for being elitist precluded the possibility that it would reach the general public, which was content to absorb the productions of the Springer-Verlag, something that caused Enzensberger to abandon poetry once before in 1964. Now, in 1980, Enzensberger leaves poetry in favour of critical prose once again, leaving his poetic works to reverberate either into the future, or into the abyss.

Conclusion

Enzensberger's Political Consistency. 1957-1980.

Throughout his career, critics tried to place Enzensberger into a traditional political grouping in order to simplify the poet's political stance. It is interesting to note how similar the results of these attempts are. In 1965, Madeleine Gustafsson called him a radical, non-communist Marxist,[186] and only three years later Jochen Steffen called him an anarcho-communist.[187] Although Enzensberger did associate with the left-wing in Germany, there is no real indication that he adhered to any party manifestoes, or to any political institutions at all. Contrary to the rather unsatisfactory labelling of Enzensberger is the overwhelming thematic evidence in his poetry and early essays especially, that he was disenamoured with political structures altogether.

Enzensberger's essays and poems on the press, government bureaucracy and a people deadened by a combination of the two show how party-political government had destroyed all that Germany might have achieved in its new beginning after the war. Enzensberger's unrelenting attacks on the establishment indicate less that he belonged to any specific movement or party, and more that he was free of the constraints that such a membership would bring. This was especially clear with his

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[186] Gustafsson 110.

[187] See Christian Linder 86.

alignment with the student movement, whose failure did not prevent Enzensberger from continuing his writing. He always remained independent enough to remain with or withdraw from a certain political movement. Enzensberger's lack of traditional political alignment suggests a healthy anarchic streak, which would also explain why Gustafsson and Steffen essentially described him as a non-communist communist.

Looking back over the period 1957-1980 when Enzensberger wrote poetry, it is clear that he was capable of altering poetic perspective, narrowing or broadening the focus of his criticism from one collection to the next. The events that took place in the 1960s and beyond also caused him many mood-swings, but these alterations in mood and poetic perspective do not reflect any compromise in his political position. The continuous descent from hope to pessimism simply reflects a poet attempting to alter that which is becoming ever-increasingly unalterable; namely German society. Finally, Enzensberger was forced to concede that he was not achieving what he had hoped through the poetic medium.

Enzensberger's final abandonment of poetry after 1980 did not signify a failure of the anti-governmental, anarchic path that Enzensberger followed, rather the failure of poetry to reach enough of an audience to make any significant impact. His intention, the "politische Alphabetisierung Deutschlands" had certainly failed, but the presence of a poet like Enzensberger to act as an independent counterbalance to the

press was a valuable contribution to the many thousands who did read his work. That he failed to enlighten Germany is not wholly surprising; he could hardly have set himself a harder task. It does however call into question the efficacy of the political poet, who, even after examining how poetry responds to a political environment,[188] still cannot appeal to a large enough audience to make the social relevance of his poetry have any practical effect. In the last instance, poetry's reputation for elitism that Enzensberger noted in Palaver[189] was inescapable. Enzensberger, as a political poet, was defeated by the unhappy combination of poetry and politics. His political position proved to be consistently aggressive throughout his career, but the poetic form proved consistently incapable of conveying political messages to that audience which needed to read poetry most, the type of "mann in der trambahn." Thus the link between poetry and politics inevitably had to dissolve, which it did for Enzensberger in 1980.

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[188] See Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik" 113-137.

[189] Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze" 43.

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